



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.
June 1973.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, June 15th, 1973, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item. The Story of the St. George Regiment, Illustrated.

This interesting address will be delivered by Mr. Kluss,
Department of Army.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Gow, Captain, Mesdames Lee, Parkes, Rawlinson,
Misses Row, Russell, Gillard.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,

President.

Phone 587.4555

Mrs. E. Wright,

Acting Secretary.

Phone 599.4884.

Mr. A. Ellis,

Research Officer.

Phone 587.1159.

Mrs. E. Eardley,

Editor & Social Secretary.

Phone 59.8078.

"EVEN IF COSTS KEEP RISING, EDUCATION WILL NEVER BECOME AS
EXPENSIVE AS IGNORANCE. "

Recent Acquisitions.

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

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| Mr. G. Eardley. | Military Compass, Age or History not known. Miniature in Frame. " " " " " |
| Mr. & Mrs. J. Harris, 10/1 Stanley Street, Arncliffe. | Silver Embossed Fish Knives & Forks. (Knives have Ornamental Bone Handles), in Presentation Case. These belonged to Mr. Harris' Mother. Green Embossed Stoneware Plate. Both gifts 1900 Circa. |

SOCIETY NEWS.

At our regular meeting on Friday, May 18th, 1973, a Presentation was made to the Secretary, Miss Jenette Noble, on the eve of her marriage to Mr. John Hindmarsh of Braidwood. Jenette has given much of her time and efforts to help the Society, and will be missed by all.

Thank you Jenette for all you have done, and we wish Good Health and Happiness to you both, from the President, Mr. Don Sinclair, and the Members of the St. George Historical Society.

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We are sad to learn of the illness of Mr. Bert Matheson, who is in Hospital. The President and Members join in wishing you a speedy recovery, and trust you will soon be back with us again.

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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 -

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| <u>Date:</u> | Saturday, June 16th, 1973. |
| <u>Place:</u> | Town Hall, Rockdale. |
| <u>Cost:</u> | Per Person - \$1.50. |
| <u>Time:</u> | 1 p.m. SHARP. Coach will leave on time. |

There are still a few seats left.

Time permitting, we could perhaps have Afternoon Tea in Vacluse House Grounds. Phone Mrs. Eardley - 59.8078.
Tea, Milk, Sugar, Cups and Biscuits provided.

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In September a Film Evening will be held in Miss Karen Wright's Home, in Botany Street, Carlton. Details later.

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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 Mrs. E. Wright, 599.4884, for further information.

Deposits Please - and you may make further payments if you wish.

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MEMBERS SLIDE EVENING.

Following the Annual Meeting on July 20th, 1973, it has been suggested that Members bring along some of their Historical Slides; these will be much appreciated and enjoyed, and will round off the evening nicely. Will you co-operate please?

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A HISTORY OF CARLTON

by

R. W. RathbonePART 2.A RAILWAY IS BUILT.

Early in the 1860's agitation commenced along the southern coastal district for improved means to transport the rich produce of the area to markets in Sydney. The small ships plying the coastal trade were both irregular and unreliable and the long, bad road was a nightmare. To ensure the development of the coal industry along the Illawarra coast, some speedy, efficient and reliable form of transport became necessary.

As a result of this agitation, added to the weight of economic factors, a number of trial surveys were begun in 1873 and continued for some years. It was intended to link the area with Sydney by means of a railway which was to cross Georges River by bridge and embankment at Rocky Point. This proved impossible owing to the difficulty in finding the bottom of the river. Successive governments balked at the prospect of bridging rivers and constructing tracks on the sides of mountains and it was not until the late 1870's that the scheme was finally tackled.

The Public Works Act of 1881 authorised the raising of \$1,020,000 for the construction of the first section of the railway to Kiama. Tenders were called for the first portion in September 1882. The date for completion as far as Hurstville was September 30, 1884.

"The effect of the coming of the railway on the landholders of the district was electric. The people became land mad and the great land boom of the eighties got under way. Land values rose enormously and a steady influx of new purchasers became evident. Farms were either subdivided and sold in allotments or purchased by building societies for subdivision."

Nowhere was this better exemplified than in the area upon which our story centres. Early in 1881, Alexander Milsop sold his orchard in Brown's Road to John Cliff. The price paid, £2,565, was nearly five times what Milsop had bought it for only seven years before. In June the same year, Cliff sold the land to Dr. C.F. Fischer for £3,465. The following year it again changed hands for £5,850 when William Kingscote, a Tamworth farmer, bought it from Fischer.

Kingscote also purchased the adjoining 34 acres which had originally belonged to James Swaine but which had passed to Patrick McMahon and later to the Keane Brothers of Murrurrundi. The price paid for this land was £7,000.

With the railway already under construction, Kingscote sold his combined holdings to Robert Doyle on July 17, 1884 for the staggering price of £25,858 and only a few hours later it passed into the hands of the Enterprise Land and Building Company Ltd. for £27,535.

Thus, in the space of four years, land worth only a few hundred pounds became worth tens of thousands.

THE RAILWAY IS OPENED.

On Wednesday, October 15, 1884, the railway as far as Hurstville was declared open and a special train left Sydney at 10.30 a.m. carrying the Hon. F.A. Wright, Minister for Works, and party who deputised for Premier Alexander Stuart. Stuart had been laid low with a stroke, but sent his good wishes and an assurance that the work had been undertaken for the benefit of the Colony as a whole and not, despite libelous accusations to the contrary, because he owned considerable areas of land through which the line passed.

The stations along the line were decked with flags and floral displays, bands played, speeches were made, toasts were drunk, refreshments indulged in and a regatta held on the Georges River.

Local residents gave vent to their emotions by gathering in small knots along the track and vigorously waving their handkerchiefs in salutation as the official train passed.

Reporters spoke of beautiful undulating country with occasional glimpses of the water and the fading lines of dim hills which presented scenes of the most picturesque description.

THE LAND DEVELOPMENT COMPANIES.

Amid all these scenes of enthusiasm and excitement, one section of the community was seized with consternation. This was the land development companies which had bought up huge areas of land adjacent to the line in the expectation of large and quick returns. In their haste they had forgotten to ascertain where the railway stations would be built, if indeed this matter had ever been seriously considered by the authorities, for it must be remembered that the prime purpose of this enterprise was to provide a rail link with the south coast not to provide for new suburban communities.

Stations were established at Arncliffe, Rockdale, Kogarah and Hurstville - but not as had been fully expected near the railway gates at the foot of Brown's Road.

THE FIRST SUBDIVISIONS.

Just one month after the railway had been opened, the first subdivision in this area went under the auctioneer's hammer. This was the Hurstville Heights Estate which had been previously owned by Alexander Milsop's brother, Thomas, and consisted of the land around Glenfarne, Shirley and Forest (now Wood) Streets.

At 1.15 p.m. on Saturday October 18, 1884, a special train left Redfern. Tickets were free and luncheon was provided in a large marquee on the ground. The auctioneers, Messrs. Hardie and Gorman, spoke of its charming situation, being surrounded by "schools, stores, churches and numerous pretty private residences". Its particular attractions were its wide streets, pure air, glorious surroundings and immense prospective value.

The hordes of would-be buyers enjoyed the day's outing, ate up the free luncheon, took in the view, breathed the pure air and departed. It was quite obvious that home seekers were not interested unless their plot was near the magical new railway.

SEA VIEW ESTATE.

On November 22 the same year, the first great land sale along Brown's Road occurred. This was the Sea View Estate at "Kogorah Heights". Again Messrs. Hardie and Gorman, on behalf of the Sydney and Suburban Mutual Provident Building, Land and Investment Company, extolled the virtues of their sale.

Sea View was described as "having magnificent rich soil, views of the ocean right through Botany Heads" and of being a park-like domain - terms £5 deposit and the balance over five years. There was no free luncheon and no buyers.

Sea View again came under the attention of the auctioneers in May 1885, amid claims of being beautifully elevated, nicely timbered and having sweet balmy air. Terms were reduced to £3 deposit, 4/9 weekly and a free ticket on the railway for one year was an added attraction. Whether it was the inducement of the free railway ticket or the sweet and balmy air, or the fact that feverish building activity on the neighbouring Ocean View Estate at Bexley where each new purchaser was trying to outdo his neighbour in the splendour of his home provided plenty of work near at hand, is not clear, but on this occasion the first sales were made.

It is rather significant that of the first dozen residents of Bruce and Wallace Streets, no less than eight of them were stonemasons, carpenters or builders. It was clear from the start that whilst Ocean View was to become the realm of the gentry, Sea View would be the home of the working man, the skilled artisan and the labourer.

Among Sea View's first residents were George Hobday, a stonemason, who built a quaint freestone cottage on the corner of Percival Street - now much extended, James Denner, a quarryman, Julius Camfield, and Edward Preen, who were gardeners at the Botanical Gardens. They all settled in Bruce Street. Wallace Street's first residents were stonemasons William Harden, John Dunstan and William Armitage, Walter Cooper, a carpenter, George Sandow, a builder, John Wakley and Edward Stores.

One of the most interesting early residents of this Estate was John Derwent, a railway ganger, whose father, James, had settled at Penshurst in 1854 and whose wife, Jane, had been the first gatekeeper at the Brown's Road crossing before moving to Bruce Street.

With the sole exception of Camfield's house, which some years later was burned to the ground, all the original houses built on this Estate still stand - most in an excellent state of repair, bearing testimony to the workmanship of their builders and to the families which erected them - and at the time of writing a number of them were still in the possession of the original families.

CARLTON ESTATE.

The most important land sale to occur along Brown's Road, which by now was being called by the alternative name of Webber's Road after the German settler, Philip Webber, whose orchard stood near its junction with the Kogarah Road, took place on November 7, 1885. This was the auctioning of the vast Carlton Estate - 550 lots at £5 deposit with the balance over 10 years - free train, free lunch and a band to boot.

As with Hurstville Heights and Sea View, the lack of easy rail access proved a weighty deterrent to any purchaser and whilst many came to partake of the free lunch and the music, very few bought. This resulted in the subdivision being withdrawn from sale and the Mercantile Building Land and Investment Company beginning immediate negotiations with the authorities for the erection of a platform on the Estate.

The important thing about this sale was the names which this suburb was to become known was used for the first time. The English sounding names of Cumberland, Durham, Fleet, Grey, High and Millafter which its streets were called, would seem to suggest that Carlton was named after the pretty lace-making village in the County of Nottingham, but it is far more likely that it was called after the bustling and prosperous suburb of the same name in Melbourne - then Australia's most populous city.

A PLATFORM IS ERECTED.

After protracted negotiations the Railway Commissioners agreed that provided the land was given free, the sum of £400 paid and a guarantee given that 60 first class tickets would be taken annually, a platform would be erected. And so, on February 15, 1887, a platform made out of sleepers with a ticket office which cost a mere £15 to erect was opened. The fact that the platform was built on the Carlton Estate and called after it gave Carlton its name.

As with the neighbouring Sea View Estate, the first settlers on this estate were people who depended for their livelihood on the furious building activity then in progress nearby.

Robert Wilson and John Paskins, both builders, settled in Carlton Parade and Ethel Street respectively, William Walters and Samuel Tretheway, joiners, were the first residents of Grey and Short Streets, whilst William Broadbridge, a painter and decorator, built in Argyle Street. One early resident of Ethel Street deserves special mention. This was Ernest Wood, an accountant, who is still remembered working in his garden with his beautiful brown beard ensconced in a neat little calico bag.

PEOPLE, PLACES AND THINGS.

However, other groups were beginning to be attracted to the area and we find that Frederick Tucker, a produce merchant, was the first resident of Mill Street. In 1887 Carlton's first general store on the corner of Bruce Street and Webber's Road, was opened by Arthur Davis - a building which despite some changes of ownership fulfils that purpose to this day. Without doubt its best known proprietor was Mrs. Alice (Old Granny) Rowe whose occupancy extended over many years during the early part of this century.

Other shops were opened in Carlton Parade and Wallace Street the following year and business directories of the day show that Carlton also boasted an accountant, a solicitor and a photographer. The photographer was James Robinson, the first resident of High Street who with his daughter, Miss Ethel Robinson, lived in the neat rendered cottage on the corner of Cumberland Street for over 50 years and has left us a unique photographic record of early Carlton.

ENTER THE RAILWAYMEN.

The closing years of the 80's saw the building industry decline and a new occupational group rise to pre-eminence. These were the railwaymen who, attracted by the cheapness of the land and its nearness to their employment, settled in Carlton in large numbers and have remained there ever since, some families now being in their third and fourth generation. Jacob Derham and Andrew Leading in Bruce Street, Thomas Milton in High Street and Joseph Holt, the first stationmaster at Carlton, are but a few of the railwaymen who settled in Carlton during this time and whose families remained for many years. In later years Curtis Cavanough and Alexander Colvin led another influx of these men. But perhaps the railway population reached its peak when James Fahy, top guard on the railway whose special responsibility was the Governor's and Commissioner's Specials, the man who shunted the first train into Hurstville Station, came to live in High Street. James Fahy was the father of "Professor" John Carlton Fahy, a well known music teacher and pianist who toured the world in the twenties as accompanist to the great Australian baritone, Peter Dawson.

THE EDGEHILL ESTATE.

Late in 1887 a third great subdivision was put up for sale. This was the Edge Hill Estate (Hill, Prospect and West - now Edgehill Streets) but by now the country was running into financial difficulties and not even the presence of a railway platform was enough to attract many purchasers for as late as 1890, only three families, those of Emma Richards, Joseph Growden and Thomas Stanway, had taken up residence on the Estate.

Despite the financial stringencies, Carlton's steady growth continued and by 1890 it was one of the largest communities along the Illawarra Line. The area around Webber's Road not only boasted a population in excess of 300 souls but a number of shops and a splendid three-storied hotel, while the wooden platform was being replaced by a new brick station costing £1,700 and gas mains were being laid along Webber's Road.

The following extract from an 1890 copy of the Sydney "Echo" gives us an excellent picture of this thriving community.

"Quite a large township has grown up round the station and it is said that about 70 children travel daily on the line to and from school at Kogarah. A movement is on foot to establish a school at Carlton."

Carlton, despite its slow beginning was on the map - though not yet officially, for if you lived on the Carlton Estate your mail was addressed - "Carlton Estate, Hurstville" and if you lived on the other side of Webber's Road it was "Sea View Estate, Kogarah" but even these official slights could not stay the hand of progress.

A MUNICIPALITY IS BORN.

Soon after the opening of the Railway in 1884, moves were made for the incorporation of Hurstville as a municipal borough. Rockdale, or as it was then called, West Botany, had been incorporated as early as 1871. In 1885 Kogarah was granted municipal status.

This prompted two prominent Hurstville residents, Joseph Walker Bibby and Lochrin Tiddy to take up a petition to have Hurstville similarly incorporated. Tiddy was the retired headmaster of Hurstville School while Bibby was a well known Sydney company secretary and auditor and man of very substantial means. He had settled at the corner of Forest Road and Webber's Road in the early 80's on land formerly owned by George Perry. Here he built a fine home distinguished by its "fire-extinguisher" tower from which magnificent views of the surrounding country could be obtained. The grounds were beautifully laid out with ornamental shrubs whilst a wide lawn lay between the house and Forest Road. In later years one of Bibby's daughters became Lady Riddell, wife of an early Governor of the Commonwealth Bank.

On March 28, 1887, the Hurstville Municipality was proclaimed and the first Municipal Election held at the Blue Post Inn on June 15, the same year. Lochrin Tiddy acted as returning officer. The results of this election are of interest -

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|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Alexander Milsop | Capitalist | 244 |
| H. Patrick | Capitalist | 222 |
| W. J. Humphrey | Contractor | 217 |
| A. E. Gannon | Capitalist | 193 |
| J. Peake | Farmer | 189 |
| H. P. Tidswell | Merchant | 187 |
| J. W. Bibby | Accountant | 177 |
| M. McRae | Landed Proprietor | 167 |
| C. Howard | Capitalist | 165 were elected. |

The unsuccessful candidates were -

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|---------------|-------------------|-----|
| D. J. McLean | Merchant Salesman | 162 |
| W. C. Corbett | Fruitgrower | 157 |
| H. Kinsela | Landowner | 129 |
| D. J. Treacy | Produce Merchant | 117 |
| H. Roberts | Builder | 91 |
| W. E. Paine | Carpenter | 73 |
| W. Harden | Stonemason | 62 |
| R. Wilson | Contractor | 57 |

Carlton's representatives met with mixed success. Former Carlton resident, Alexander Milsop, who topped the poll, was elected Hurstville's first Mayor. Joseph Bibby, not surprisingly, was also elected to the Council but William Harden and Robert Wilson finished at the bottom of the poll.

Carlton subsequently became part of the Bexley Ward, by far the most closely settled of the three Wards which went to make up the new Municipality, and it is reported that between 1887 and 1890 Bexley Ward increased in

population by some 469 souls and numbered 363 houses, 13 shops and one hotel, the vast majority of which were clustered in small groups around the station at Carlton or along Webber's Road.

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EXTRACT FROM THE CENTENNIAL HISTORY OF N. S. W. 1888.

WEST BOTANY

West Botany is a borough within the electorate of Canterbury, and was incorporated in 1871. It includes La Perouse, Little Bay, Sandringham, and Sans Souci. It is bounded on the north by Cooks River, on the south by Georges River, on the east by Botany Bay, and on the west by Holl Creek and Rocky Point Road. Its area is four square miles, or about 2,550 acres. It is divided into three wards, namely, Rockdale Ward, Arncliffe Ward, and Scarborough Ward. A large portion of this area lies contiguous to Botany Bay, and is swampy, and occupied by Chinese for vegetable gardening. The residents are at present seeking to have the name changed to Rockdale, and doubtless before we "go to print" it will be effected. They have few buildings of any prominence, save some excellent private residences. They are building at present a fine Town Hall which, among other rooms, will have one with a seating capacity for 600 persons. This municipality is remarkable for its pleasure facilities. Lady Robinsons Beach (now called Cook Park) is a reserve skirting the waterfront, seven miles in length, affording pleasure-seekers ample opportunity to drive or ride on one of the most lovely beaches in the world. There are huge commodious baths erected here for the accommodation of the health and pleasure-seeker.

Scarborough Park is another large reserve, of 100 acres, further south, and when fully completed according to design, it will be an additional attraction to the excursionists who flock from the city on Saturday and Sunday, after a week's labour, for the fresher sea breezes, especially in the summer months. The following gentlemen have served as Mayors - William Yates in 1871; James Beehag, 1872 and 1873; Elias Godfrey, 1874; James Beehag, 1875 and 1876; James Collins, 1877; John Bowmer, 1878 to 1884; W.G. Judd, 1885, 1886, and 1887. Mr. Thomas Leader is Council Clerk.

Botany West (or Rockdale) will no doubt come to be, in the near future, one of the places of fashionable resort, as it has many natural advantages suitable for these purposes; but as a suburb of permanent residences, we scarcely think it will equal many other places.

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