



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe. 2205.  
October 1973.

Dear Friend and Member,

The next meeting of the Society will be held as follows: -

Date: Friday Evening, October 19th, 1973, at 8 p.m.

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

Business General: Election of Social Secretary.

Syllabus Item: Mr. Peter Sage will give an Illustrated talk on:

" HISTORIC TASMANIA "

Supper Roster: Mrs. Coghlan, Captain, Mesdames Perkins, Longhurst,  
O'Shea, Samuelson, O'Meara.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,

President.

Phone 587.4555.

Mr. A. Ellis,

Research Officer.

Phone 587.1159.

Mrs. E. Eardley,

Secretary & Editor.

Phone 59.8078.

"For what Act or Achievement would you most like to be remembered?"

### Items donated to 'Lydham Hall'

Mr. A. Field, Bellevue Street, Arncliffe.	Piece of Carved Ivory from "Boxer Rebellion". Seal, Enamelled Dress Stud, Silver propelling Pen, Gold propelling Pencil, Metal Embossed Tobacco Jar, Gold Locket, all of which were brought from England by Great Grandfather. Small Mahogany Cabinet, about 8 inches high, made by Great Grandfather. Old Photograph Album, Copy of : "Cruise of 'H.M.S. Renown' ", carrying H.R.H. Prince of Wales, on visit to Australia in the early 1920's.
---	---

---

It is with regret that we record the Passing of Miss Jo Power and Mr. Piper, two of our early Members.

---

Society Badges are available, also copies of books "Heritage in Stone" and "All Stations to Como". Copies of our Early Monthly Bulletins may be had on application.

---

### Social News.

It is sincerely hoped that the Society will soon resume the "Outings" which seemed to be enjoyed by those Members and their Friends who supported our efforts. Maybe others would care to join in and make the Social side of the Society, which is a necessary part of any Organisation, the success it should be. This cannot be done without your help and support. If you have any suggestions please pass them on to your Social Secretary, who, I am sure, will try to please you.

---

"Lydham Hall is becoming known far and wide. On 26th September, 1973, 45-60 Senior Citizens and their President, Mrs. Lanckshear, came by bus from Coogee to inspect Lydham Hall.

---

Alderman Ron Rathbone has returned from his holiday overseas, and has promised to show his slides to the Society.

---

## LYDHAM HALL FUND RAISING COMMITTEE

### PRESIDENT'S REPORT - 1972-1973.

Once again a year has ended and all too quick, one wonders where the time has gone.

It has been rather a quiet year in one way, yet in another we have achieved a lot.

The Picture Night held in September 1972, was very successful, and many thanks go to Mr. Peter Sage for his outstanding slides and commentary, also to our Members and their Friends for their support.

The Christmas raffles as usual were decorated by our expert, Alderman Ford.

The bus tours have always been very happy occasions, judging by the comments around the meetings. Thank you Mrs. Eardley.

This year we have tried making the raffles more appealing and to everyone's liking; it is surprising how much time can be spent in trying to work them out for a year; we would greatly appreciate any ideas from the Members of this Society

The amount of money you have heard "raised" in the Treasurer's report has been by a very small committee of four ladies, with the help of Mr. and Mrs. Stead, who, we hope, will be with us again soon.

To Miss Otten for her untiring work at "Lydham Hall", her office as Treasurer of the Committee, and the selling of the raffle tickets each meeting, a sincere "Thank you" for a job well done.

To Mrs. Eardley for her job as Secretary, a gift that only the chosen few have, for the many phone calls made, and writing of endless letters, "Thank you".

To Mrs. Gash for the use of her home for our meetings, the friendly cup of tea, and her loyal support. "Thank you".

To the Members of this Society, without whose kindness, generosity and support we would not function, "Thank you All", and I do hope you will continue in the great work through 1973-1974.

Doreen Prebble.  
President.

St. George Historical Society. (Lydham Hall Fund Raising Committee.)

Financial Statement as at 30th June, 1973.

<u>Income.</u>		<u>Expenditure.</u>	
<u>By.</u> Raffles	\$146.25	<u>By.</u> Pictures Frames,	\$29.00
Cake Sales	12.60	Petty Cash	30.00
Stall Proceeds	35.87	Mirror Repairs	20.00
Donations	54.80	Rockdale Council for	
Gents Suppers	17.10	Books	60.00
In, Bus Trips	301.56	St. Geo. Hist. Soc.	
Social Evenings	65.80	for Books	20.68
St. Geo. His. Books	22.40	Vinyl Tiles	290.00
Rockdale Council Books	24.00	Globes, Brooms	
Lydham Hall Admissions	230.90	Mops, etc., Lyd. Hall	32.12
		Film Night Exp.	2.74
Profit B. Fwd.		Share of Raffle,	
Bus Trip, Prev. Year	7.00	St. Geo. His. Soc.	14.00
Bank Interest, Dec.	13.59	Bus. Payments.	253.00
Bank " Jun.	4.76		
		Total.	\$751.54
Total Income.	\$936.63	Deposited on Loan to	
		(To St. G. B. Soc.	800.00)
		(To " " "	400.00)

Making a surplus over Expenditure of \$185.39 ... for the year,  
(\$18.66 lower than 1972.)

Balance at Bank. \$189.04      30th June (less U/Pres Cheque \$32.12

Interest Bearing Loan St. Geo. Building Soc. \$12,000.  
plus interest to date                      40.63

\$12,040.63

Bank.

Balance. Brght. Forward from 1972.

\$1166.18

Having examined the Books of the Lydham Hall Fund Raising Committee  
for the year ended 30th June, 1973,

We wish to report that the Books have been kept in an orderly and  
correct manner.

We certify that in our opinion that the Financial Statement herewith,  
show the true position of the Accounts of the above fund.

Signed ..... Miss Margaret Dunsmore.

Signed ..... Alderman Arthur Ford.  
Joint Auditors.

17th July, 1973.

(Stock in Hand of Council Books Paid for, 52 \$52 retail value.)

A HISTORY OF CARLTON, N.S.W.

by

R. W. RATHBONEPART 4.THE McCONOCHIES.

No description of Carlton before the turn of the century would be complete without reference to the McConochies - perhaps the grandest family who ever lived in Carlton.

William and John McConochie were the sons of a ship owner and merchant of Glasgow who lost heavily and soon after his death they decided to migrate to Australia. They arrived at Port Phillip in 1841, William then aged 23 and John 18, and made their way westward to Portland where William was able to obtain work as a clerk with the Henty Brothers. John, however, preferred to go on the land and with the assistance of a well-to-do friend of their father's the two brothers took up 6,000 acres in the Coleraine district on which they raised cattle. They called their station Konongwootong Creek. Here, despite many setbacks they prospered and John McConochie was able to add a second station, Coomburah, in Queensland, to the family holdings. In 1859 he married Mary Booth of Launceston and between that date and 1875 nine children - two sons and seven daughters - were born of the marriage. In 1892 John McConochie sold Konongwootong Creek and retired to the fine old home built some years previously along the Forest Road for Sidney Alfred Fullford called "Norwood".

Fullford, a prominent company solicitor, had obtained the land from the Perry family but in the great bust of the nineties had become legally and financially embarrassed. "Norwood" commanded one of the most expansive views of Botany Bay along the ridge and its grounds were laid out with ornamental shrubs and sweeping lawns.

Amid these lovely surroundings John McConochie installed his family and "Norwood" became the scene of frequent garden parties in aid of various charities and balls on its quite extensive ballroom. Even after the death of John McConochie in 1898, the family continued to entertain quite lavishly until the tragic death of Miss Eva McConochie who was found drowned at the bottom of the well. After this occurrence the family gradually withdrew from society.

Mrs. McConochie and her daughters were familiar figures in Carlton as they drove to church, to the railway station or to some social function in their carriage and pair. The surviving son of the family, Walter McConochie, who had taken over his father's Queensland properties, is remembered particularly for the fact that some years before World War 1 he landed an aeroplane in the grounds of "Norwood" when he visited his mother in her declining years. In 1917 Mrs. McConochie died and in 1928 the two surviving daughters sold "Norwood" to the Department of Education for the erection of a High School.

Over a period of years the old home, through the ravages of neglect and vandalism fell into disrepair and was ultimately demolished. In 1956 the

the Sydney Technical High School was transferred to this site from Darlinghurst and a fine new set of buildings erected.

### THE MOVEMENT FOR SEPARATION.

On September 17, 1900, Queen Victoria signed the proclamation which created the Commonwealth of Australia. This event appears to have excited little, if any, interest in Carlton which at that time was celebrating the long worked for secession of the Bexley Ward from the Hurstville Municipality to become the Borough of Bexley.

This movement for separation had begun in July 1890, at a public meeting in Bexley. In September of the same year, at Mitchell's Royal Hotel, the advantages of independent local self-government were explained to the people of Carlton. A petition was organised and signatures collected but owing to the financial stringencies of the next few years it was not until June 28, 1900, that the Borough of Bexley finally came into being. Early in the next month the people of the new Borough went to the polls - in Carlton, to Grant's Hall - but of the nine aldermen elected to the first Council only one, Mr. John Cooper, of Fleet Street, hailed from Carlton. The first meeting of the new Council took place in the Carlton Debating Hall on August 15, and Ald. J. W. Larbalestier of Bexley was elected Mayor, whereupon the Council adjourned to the Royal Hotel "where the usual toasts were drunk" to celebrate the occasion. It is interesting to note that one of the first items of business transacted by the new Council was an instruction "that the Inspector of Nuisances be instructed to use stringent and drastic measures to suppress the nuisance" - Carlton's goats had been on the rampage again.

On January 23, 1901, news was received that the Queen, after a record reign of over 63 years, had expired peacefully at Osborne House on the Isle of Wight. Carlton, along with the rest of the Empire, mourned the passing of this legendary old lady. Public functions and sporting events were cancelled, shops suitably draped, newspapers were edged in black and nearly everyone wore a small piece of purple crepe to express a grief that was as profound as it was spontaneous . . . but a far more personal form of grief was to strike this small community only a few weeks later.

### THE SYDENHAM RAIL DISASTER.

On February 15, 1901, the 5.55 p.m. train from the city was derailed just south of Sydenham Station whilst travelling at a speed of over fifty miles per hour. The first carriage was totally destroyed and the locomotive and second carriage were severely damaged. Nine people were killed or subsequently died and 22 were badly injured. Of those who died, four were residents of Carlton - William Mort, aged 14, who was killed instantly, George Goulder, 15, who died soon after admission to the Marrickville District Hospital, Charles Spencer, 26, and Frederick Jackel, 42, who died in the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

Of all the funerals which took place along the Illawarra Line the following Sunday, none were so impressive as those at Carlton.

Goulder had been a bugler in E Company of the Illawarra Rifles and his flag-draped coffin led by the St. George District Band and followed by Lieutenant J. W. James (O.C.) and sixty rank and file together with a detach-

ment from the Detective Department of the Police Force to which his father belonged, wended its way down Durham Street to the strains of the Dead March. At High Street it was joined by Spencer's funeral and near the railway gates by Mort's. Many of those who lined the processional route and who subsequently followed by special train to Woronora Cemetery had bandaged heads and limbs - mute testimony of a tragedy which could have been much worse.

Jackel, who died later than the others also had a large funeral attended by many members of the Protestant Alliance Friendly Society of which he was a prominent member.

### RUMBLINGS OF DISCONTENT.

As early as March 1901, the residents of Carlton began to have grave misgivings about the advantages of their newly won Municipal status. The progress and reforms which they had been promised showed no signs of eventuating. The Council was experiencing severe financial difficulties; what few improvements were made, had been provided in Bexley and the kindly J. W. Larbalestier appeared to be a tool in the hands of the "Bexley Clique" as they sweltered over their problems in the oppressive summer of 1901. It was about this time that moves were made to build Bexley's Town Hall at Carlton - a move which was probably influenced more by the presence of reasonable means of refreshment than by geographical convenience. The Council continued to meet, however, by the light of a kerosene lamp in the school room of the Rev. C. J. Forscutt's Rockdale College in Gladstone St., Bexley.

A protest meeting of ratepayers in Grant's Hall presided over by Mr. W. Wiseman was assured that all was well but the great majority remained sceptical. The three worst problems were the watercourse which ran under Short Street and Webber's Road known as the West Kogarah Drain, which was the favourite dumping ground for everything from discarded mattresses to discarded horses; the inadequate rail facilities both at the Station and on the trains and, of course, the straying stock which wreaked havoc on the gardens and nurseries which abounded in the area. One Council correspondent, Charles H. Everson, complained of being attacked by a stray cow in Mill Street. Another had run over a goat in Carlton Parade, "breaking his cart" and "receiving an injury" to himself.

At last it was decided to prevail upon the redoubtable J. G. Griffin to take up the cudgels on Carlton's behalf.

### JOHN GEORGE GRIFFIN.

Of all the people who have lived in Carlton since the opening of the railway, none was as outstanding a personality as Griffin.

John George Griffin was born in Richmond, Victoria, in 1846. He was educated in England and at an early age entered the service of the Great Western Railway Company where he qualified as a civil engineer and surveyor. He was engaged for two years on railway construction work in Bulgaria and Rumania. Returning to Australia in 1867, he settled at Portland, Victoria, for a time as shire engineer. Later he came to Sydney where he set up in business as a surveyor being the principal of the firm of J. G. Griffin and Harrison, Surveyors. At one time he served as supervising engineer on the



extension of the Great Northern Railway in N.S.W. He settled in Carlton in 1890 and in 1893 was elected to the Hurstville Council where his abrupt manner and an inability to suffer fools brought him into immediate conflict with his colleagues. For three stormy years, 1893, 1894 and again in 1898, he was Mayor of that Municipality. In 1896 he was the centre of a minor controversy. Having secured an overhead footbridge for the Station at Carlton, he refused to use it, continuing to walk across the railway lines in defiance of a notice he himself had had erected forbidding it.

At the memorable Municipal Election of 1899 Griffin was strongly challenged in the Bexley Ward by Mr. W.H. Wicks, of "Duntry", Ocean (now Verdun) Street. Wicks had the backing of such influential figures as Frederick Grant and John Cooper and went to considerable pains to point out that Mayor Griffin had spent the entire coming year's income of the Council without authority. Griffin, however, mobilised the resources of the Council to his side, using Council paid employees as his scrutineers inside the booths and as his agents outside as well as employing them to drive known Griffin supporters to the polls in Council owned conveyances. Whilst the ethics of his actions could possibly be challenged, the success could not. From the time of his arrival in Sydney, Griffin had lived at "Thalinga", No.91 Mill Street, Carlton, yet he was for a period an alderman and Mayor of the Manly Council. He served five terms as an alderman of the Sydney City Council between 1900 and 1915 and for over 20 years he represented the Suburban Municipalities on the Metropolitan Board of Water Supply and Sewerage. He was the first elected President of the Municipal Association which later became the Local Government Association and was a member from its inception. He was a strong supporter of the Free Trade Party and unsuccessfully sought election to the State Parliament for the seats of Hawkesbury and Marrickville. He once opposed Sir Henry Parkes for a city seat. He was an ardent advocate of a Greater Sydney scheme and was a pioneer of better working conditions for Council employees.

When the Borough of Bexley was formed he had been a candidate for the first Council, but had not been elected.

Such was the calibre of the man who was now called upon to plead Carlton's case.

At the Municipal Election of 1902 Griffin topped the poll and almost immediately the fireworks began. Griffin was a caustic critic whose utterances often stirred up angry feelings. He so harried the Bexley selected Mayor, Henry Watson Harradence, over the state of the West Kogarah Drain, the dangerous pedestrian crossing across the railway line from Gray Street, Kogarah, to Guinea Street, and the unsatisfactory local safeguards against the outbreak of bubonic plague then assailing waterfront areas of the city, that Harradence attempted to silence Griffin by pointed and repeated references to "The Chain Letter Scandal".

#### THE CHAIN LETTER SCANDAL.

At a packed public meeting, held on May 30, 1902, at the Royal Hotel, Griffin made the following explanation.



In 1895, whilst a member of the Board of the St. George Cottage Hospital, he had read in the London Times a letter advocating the use of chain letters for charitable appeals - each letter to contain ten postage stamps which would subsequently be sold. He had suggested to his 17 year old daughter, Audrey, that this would be an excellent way to raise money for a much needed children's ward at the hospital.

It was hoped to raise £25 in this way which, with the government subsidy of £1 for £1, would contribute £50 towards the appeal. The scheme was not only a spectacular success but soon got completely out of hand. Hundreds of letters arrived daily at the Griffin home in Mill Street from places as far away as England, America and the Continent. After £64 had been contributed to the hospital Griffin decided his daughter could no longer cope and he put on a man to handle the matter at his office in the Equitable Building in the City. When the £64 was handed to the hospital committee they refused to devote it towards the erection of a children's ward.

Griffin thereupon refused to hand over any more money and protracted legal manoeuvres ensued. Finally, Griffin resigned from the hospital board and wiped his hands of the whole matter.

Ugly rumours persisted that Griffin had used the money for his own purposes and a Royal Commission was demanded. Griffin denied making money from the venture, producing evidence to show that all money received after the initial payment of £64 had been taken up in wages and legal fees.

Griffin was accorded an overwhelming vote of confidence whilst Harradence was greeted with cries of derision. One persistently noisy interjector was flattened by the editor of the "St. George's Advocate" who was having difficulty in hearing Griffin's explanation.

## ROUND TWO.

Having failed to discredit Griffin in this manner, Harradence adopted a ruse that was as clumsy as it was petty.

After the minutes of the Council Meeting of September 29, 1902, had been confirmed, Harradence privately instructed the Council Clerk, Hector Wearne, to insert a motion in Griffin's name to the effect that all persons owing £2 or more in rates were to be prosecuted. Times were still hard - particularly in Carlton and the Council received many requests during these years from insolvent ratepayers to work out their rates.

Griffin indignantly denied having moved such a motion - pointing out that he had not even been at the meeting on the night he was supposed to have moved it. Harradence, realising his folly, then tried to erase the motion with acid but succeeded only in making several large holes in the pages of the Minute Book.

There then followed three stormy meetings.

At the first, Griffin, backed by a cheering gallery of Carlton residents, demanded the resignation of Harradence as Mayor. This motion was carried with Harradence as the sole dissident - even his Bexley colleagues could not countenance this action.

Then Griffin demanded an explanation from the Council Clerk, Much against Griffin's wish it was decided to hear this explanation in closed Council. The packed gallery was understandably upset, Griffin was beside himself with rage. He swooped down on the one and only copy of the Council by-laws, rolled them into a ball and threw them at J. W. LARBALSTIER, who had replaced HARRADENCE as Mayor.

He refused to resume his seat but threw open the windows and relayed proceedings to the excited crowd outside.

Mr. Wearne tendered his resignation as Council Clerk.

Finally, Griffin moved that HARRADENCE be proceeded against for "altering, mutilating and defacing the minute book of the Bexley Council" but was ruled out of order for his "boorish, ungentlemanly and offensive conduct".

### THE YEARS BETWEEN.

There were 82 applications to fill Mr. Wearne's position and it took two full nights to consider them. Eventually, Richard W. Churchill, whose father had settled on the Edgehill Estate in 1890 after his retirement as headmaster of Arncliffe School was selected and peace temporarily restored.

The Griffin versus HARRADENCE duel flared up regularly for the next six years until in the election of 1908 HARRADENCE was rejected by the electors at the bottom of the poll.

Late in 1903 an important land sale occurred in Carlton. This was the auctioning of Dominey's Estate by Mr. Alex Loudon, who had purchased the pioneer Dominey holding in Webber's Road for subdivision. The waterhole had been filled in, Caledonian Street extended through to Webber's Road and Rawson Avenue, named for the then Governor, Sir Harry Rawson, made its appearance. In August 1904, Milsop Street was cleared of stumps and the surrounding land offered for sale.

Early in 1905 it was reported that - "the creek near Mill Street is polluted with dead animals" and renewed efforts were made to have the whole drain from High Street to West Kogarah made into a properly constructed storm-water channel. Representations were also made to Hon. J. H. Carruthers, the local member, "to obviate the nuisance caused by steam rising through the decking of the overhead bridge at Carlton". In the same year four lots on the Grantham Estate were purchased and a new road put through to open up the dead ends of Byrnes, Cameron and Henry Streets. The locals called it Cow Lane but the Council decided to name it Griffin Avenue.

### ST. JAMES CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

In 1905 Rev. J. Howell Price was appointed Rector of the Anglican Parish of Christ Church, Bexley, and was somewhat shocked to find the most populous part of his domain lacked even the most elementary accommodation for the holding of religious services - the people of Carlton being forced to walk long distances to Kogarah, Hurstville or Bexley to attend church. It was, however, some years before he commenced open air services on a paddock which now forms part of the playground of the Carlton Infants School.

Older residents can still remember this square-jawed man of God mounted on an upturned fruit case, his shaggy head sheltered from the hot summer sun by an umbrella held by one of his congregation.

By 1910 services were being held in a large marquee and early that year it was decided to erect a school hall on three blocks of land purchased at the corner of Henry and Percival Streets.

About this time the Chinese Christian Church in Wexford Street, Surry Hills, was being demolished. Howell Price managed to acquire it and have it carted out to Carlton on Horse drawn trolleys.

For the next six months a band of ten or a dozen volunteers, working every Saturday afternoon laboured earnestly to re-erect it - but alas, not one of its builders was a skilled tradesman and only a matter of weeks after its completion, on July 18, 1910, a 60 m.p.h. southerly gale again demolished the building.

Undaunted, the volunteers, this time working under the direction of Mr. David Knox - a qualified carpenter, erected a larger and stronger building - and on January 11, 1911, the foundation stone of the new St. James Church was laid by the Most Rev. John Charles Wright, D.D., Archbishop of Sydney and Primate of Australia and officially opened by Archdeacon Francis Bertie Boyce on July 23, the same year.

Its first minister was the Rev. Robert Strong, although a number of curates from Bexley, including Rev. E. Potter, G.P. Birk, R. Harley-Jones and C.H. Tomlinson had earlier ministered to its needs. Its first Sunday School superintendent was Mr. Henry Stringer. Under the rectorships of the Rev. Thomas Holliday and Robert L. Houston, the infant church progressed until in 1930 it became an independent ecclesiastical district with the Rev. C. J. Sumner as rector.

In 1936 the fine old home built during the nineties for prominent Sydney accountant Llewellyn Sands, in Wallace Street was acquired as a Rectory. In 1953 under the rectorship of Rev. Kenneth L. Walker, the first portion of a substantial brick church was opened and the small weather-board building which had served the Parish for the previous forty years was relegated to the position of Church Hall with only its huge reinforced roof and ornate door hinges as reminders of its stormy beginnings and oriental ancestry.

#### THE PRE-WAR ERA.

The remaining years before the outbreak of the first World War were years of great progress for Carlton. Streets which had formerly been little more than bush tracks were cleared and aligned. Footpaths were constructed and tarred - E.W. Potter, of Carlton, being one of the Council's chief contractors. No section of the community appreciated this latter improvement more than the children who could now drive their scooters and billy-carts at break-neck speed down the sloping streets without the bone-shaking rigours of doing so on the unsealed roads. Those adults who were not agile enough to get out of the way were collected en route and the civic fathers were in full cry.

Constant agitation took place for the elimination of the Webber's Road vehicular, and Gray Street pedestrian crossings and their replacement by two subways. Complaints about the insanitary condition of the West Kogarah Creek were persistent and representations to the Railway Commissioners for better rail facilities were never ending.

Moves for the Borough of Bexley's inclusion in either a Greater Sydney or Greater St. George Scheme were steadfastly rejected.

On February 10, 1906, a local option poll was taken in the Borough. The residents of Bexley voted overwhelmingly against the granting of a liquor licence in that part of the world but Carlton voted more than two to one to retain its beloved Royal Hotel.