



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe. 2205.  
December 1973.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, December 21st, 1973, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Films by courtesy of the Rural Bank.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Coghlan, Captain. - Will as many Ladies as possible  
help with the Christmas Supper please?

Ladies please bring a plate for this "Festive" occasion.

Mr. D. Sinclair,

President.

Phone 587.4555.

Mrs. E. Eardley,

Secretary.

Phone 59.8078.

Mrs. E. Wright,

Treasurer & Social Sec.

Phone 599.4884.

Mr. A. Ellis,

Research Officer.

Phone 587.1159.

The President, Mr. Don Sinclair, wishes all Members and Friends a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

His Worship the Mayor, Alderman George Moore, and Mrs. Moore, have accepted an invitation to be present at our Christmas Meeting and Party on Friday, December 21st.

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Items Donated to "Lydham Hall".

Mr. A. Field,                      Very old Smoothing Plane, China Gravy Boat, and  
Bellevue Street,                  many old Photographs and Cards.  
Arncliffe.

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Special.                      " Date to Remember "

Date:      Saturday, March 30th, 1974, at 8 p.m.

Peter Sage will present: " Songs of Australia ", Slides of Australia, accompanied by such Singers as :- Rolf Harris, Lionel Long, Slim Dusty, and others.

This will be something different, a show you are sure to enjoy.

Do come along and bring your Friends. Full details at December Meeting.

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Canberra Weekend - October 5th-6th-7th.      Details later.

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An Apology to Miss Mabel Cheetham.      We are indeed sorry to learn of  
your sad loss.

MEMORIES OF DAYS LONG PAST AT KOGARAH SUPERIOR PUBLIC  
SCHOOL.

Gifford & Eileen Eardley.

It is pleasant to recall the games of the early nineteen-hundreds which come readily to the mind, and no doubt there were others which have been overlooked. One wonders if any, or all of them, are still played by school children, perhaps under another name. In passing, one should list some of the teachers of those now far-off days, men of estimable character and strong in the wrist when wielding a cane. There was Mr. Musgrove, the centre for the Glebe Soccer Team, an active gentleman who handled the sporting fixtures associated with Kogarah School. He also had an eye for a good cook and enlisted the services of Jackie Gray to take messages across to the then mistress of the cooking class for girls, notes which eventually led, so it has been said, to a happy marriage. There was Ted Huxley who was of pleasant disposition and noted for laying out lessons on the large blackboard with stubby pieces of chalk, his spectacles pushed upwards to rest on his forehead, where they gave a good mirror view of any scholarly antics going on behind his back. Then, suddenly, the culprit would be most surprised to receive a blow on the face or head with the piece of chalk, Mr. Huxley having an unerring aim and could throw with considerable force as he quickly swung around. Said culprit was then required to search for the chalk and return it from whence it came receiving at the same time the promise of a caning if he did not mend his ways.

Mr. Malcolm St. John Lamb was an ex-army major of irascible temperament, who controlled his class with military discipline, said control being greatly assisted by his ability to throw planes, wooden mallets, and such-like wood-working tools, also with unerring aim, at some boy who had aroused his ire. Young Fred Brierly managed to dodge the outward flight of a heavy mallet on one occasion, the implement passing through the glass window, smashing it to pieces. Fred had the pleasing duty of going outside to retrieve the tool. No one fooled about in the woodworking class when the major was present but, apart from his tool-throwing prowess, the major was a very fine fellow, and a veteran of the Boer War. His name is recorded on the Honour Roll of the 1914-16 War in St. Paul's Church of England at Kogarah.

Another veteran of the Boer War was Samuel Fuller, who had a white lump atop his head, relic of a narrow escape in some battle episode, and one that certain members of the class would have liked to fit with a brim made from cardboard, thus converting the lump to resemble a little hat. However, the idea was purely speculative. Sam was a most decent fellow to his pupils and sported a "soup-trainer" moustache with turned up ends, a hirsute adornment generally referred to as "Handle-bars". Mr. Saxby taught Upper Second Class and was a quiet man who refused to be ruffled. A similar gentleman, Mr. Keogh, proved a good teacher to the Lower Third Class. The Science-master, Mr. Martin, patrolled his gang of young scientists with stealthy tread, keeping a discerning eye on their

activities, and also keeping hidden beneath the back of his coat, a cane-handled feather duster ready for immediate application if found necessary.

Another quiet but efficient man was Mr. Bruce who handled Lower Second Class, whilst Bill Mathieson, a tall man with artistic tastes taught the drawing class, and his splendid voice led the singing class for the boys. At least one of his drawing pupils learnt much from the ability of Bill Mathieson to delineate architecture and landscape through the medium of a lead pencil. The teaching gentleman also saved the life of Joey Myers when he got into difficulties at the Sans Souci Baths then owned by a Mr. Harvey. Mr. Bennett was another worthwhile teacher, a pleasant stoutish man with a rubicund face and sparse hair, known and universally liked as "Monkey Bennett". This gentleman also came from the Boer War Army, and like the other ex-army men, was most popular with his pupils. Thirty years later I met him at a lodge. He said, "Well Gifford, you did not expect to see your old Monkey here, did you?"

The master of the Sixth Class, J. H. Laws by name and a stern austere Scot, was another disciplinarian who stood for no nonsense from his pupils. He was a good teacher and later became a headmaster of Kogarah; W. T. Anderson, was tall, learned, and dignified. He had a reputation for the severity of his "Sixers", administered in a cold-blooded manner in the hallway outside his private office. It was no uncommon sight to see several unhappy miscreants waiting patiently in that hallway to receive his personal attention and our schoolboy hearts went out to them by the making of rude gestures and the poking out of tongues. W. T. Anderson handled the affairs of the great school with tact and firmness, and also with a great degree of understanding and kindness. He was very proud of his trained "Drum and Fife Band" who played the children into class each morning. As a Freemason of note he became foundation master of Lodge Kogarah and also at a later date, of Lodge Sans Souci.

### THE SCHOOLBOY GAMES AT THE KOGARAH SUPERIOR PUBLIC SCHOOL.

CHASINGS. This was a progressive game in which the chased pupils had to be tipped (or touched) by the chaser, after which the chased became the chaser. It was a spirited pastime which burnt up a lot of boyish energy.

COCKALORUM. This strange name, usually pronounced as "COCKY-LORUM", was given to a most active game when a group ranging from forty to one hundred boys were fully engaged. First of all at least five boys would go round the playground calling out at the top of their voices "COCKY-LORUM". Those boys who wanted to participate in the game would range themselves on opposite sides of the playground, against the fenceline. The aforementioned five or so lads would take up a position about midway between the opposing ranks, after which players from either rank would try to run, either singly or in groups, to the opposite side of the playground, meanwhile if at all possible avoiding being caught by those awaiting in the centre. When so caught the captor shrieked "COCKY-LORUM. ONE. TWO. THREE", after which the captured stayed in the centre and

assisted with the catching process. When all the participants had been thus way-laid the game was completed and, usually, another repetition commenced.

COWBOYS AND INDIANS. This stalking game was generally played on the way home from school as it needed a bushy terrain for its fulfilment and was all the better if played amongst the hiding places afforded by a sand-stone hillside. The rocky terrain that once existed above Frys Paddock on the western side of the railway line at the approach to Kogarah Station formed an ideal location. One group of boys, armed to the teeth with wooden pistols, made from the branches of garden shrubs, or better still cast iron replicas purchased from the local papershop in particular, the latter weapons firing caps which, to the affluent, could be purchased at one penny per small flat round-shaped box. The resulting din was terrific and most exciting. The "Indians" generally were armed with bows and arrows and adorned with headbands of string from which projected feathers culled from rooster tails of the birds contained within the fowl runs which were common at the period in most backyards. One of the everlasting problems of this hide-and-go-seek game concerned those who, in the course of events, had been "killed" and would not lie down in a proper manner, although their death agonies were well worth watching. This impasse often led to screaming arguments and sometimes ended in a resort to fisticuffs and a resulting howling match.

RELEASINGS. This was a fast-moving game suitable for the playground. A group of boys, say six in number, stood with their backs to the classroom wall, or the fence, waiting for a hand touch from those boys ranged outside a semi-circular shaped defence ring of lads who endeavoured to prevent such hand-touching taking place. If an outsider broke through the ranks of the defenders without being caught, and touched a captive, this pair had to run the gauntlet of the defenders to escape. If caught, they too became defenders. The game continued until all the captives had been either captured or released. It was a fast and often furious business.

HORSES. More or less confined to the younger players was the game of "HORSES" whereby the "Steed", a kicking and bucking youngster, had his arms tied to the ends of a piece of string or cord which served as reins. By these he was guided by the driver running along behind. Strangely enough this active game appeared to be reserved to the afternoons and when returning homeward bound from school. Later in the day the "HORSE" would be noted in the shafts of a "billy-cart", and both the horse and its driver were very solemn and dignified, although the former had a certain amount of latitude in neighing and being fractious.

HIDINGS. At this period in the history of Kogarah Superior Public School there were several age-old gum trees, real patriarchs, growing in the grounds, as well as a border along the fence line, of exotic trees which had reached maturity, such as box trees, camphor-laurels, and American magnolias, whilst at the Regent Street frontage, spreading its great limbs half way across and shading that thoroughfare, was a magnificent Port Jackson Figtree. Some iconoclast in the employ of the Education Department, with a hatred for trees, has been responsible for the destruction of most of this shady beauty and also of the little seats that once stood around their trunks for the convenience of the pupils. The trunks also formed excellent bases for the active game of "Hidings". "Let's play hidings" usually brought

a group of boys together, one of the number facing to the trunk, now designated as the "Whippy", with his face buried in his arms, the requirement being that his eyes should be closed and that he counts one hundred, either by units, fives, or tens. Then he called "Whippy coming ready or not". Meanwhile the rest of the group hid themselves to the best advantage and it was "Whippy's" task to spy them out whilst keeping an active eye on and in touch with his base trunk. Spotting a player he would shout, in effect, "I spy Johnnie, One, Two, Three", and to then run and touch his "whippy". Oftimes another player could, and often would, race in and beat him to the whippy shouting "All in the Whippy's taken". In this case the "Whippy" lad had to undergo further efforts at the tree trunk. When everybody associated with the game had been spied upon the first named Johnnie became the whippy.

COCK-FIGHTING. This game was played generally by two pairs of boys, the smaller boys being mounted astride the larger boys' backs, being held in position by the looped arms of the "stead". Then came the cock-fight, in the course of which each contestant tried to pull over and ground his opponent. Occasionally this game was run on a competitive basis with up to a dozen couples taking part, the ensuing melee usually taking place on a sandy section of the playground. It was wild horse-play at its best.

SADDLE-MY-NAG, more usually pronounced "Saddlemenag" with the accent on the nag, was a rough game where some minor hurts and bruises were occasionally experienced. One player stood erect with his back to either a wall or a handy tree-trunk in order to gain physical support. The second player crouched down and placed his head in the crotch of the first player and with his shoulders jammed against the latter's thighs, his hands wrapped around the latter's body. Then, in a similar crouching position, came several other boys making the so-called "Nag". Some six feet or so away from the rear boy of the "Nag" a base line was scratched in the soil to form a starting point for the activities of the rest of the team. They, in single file, made a run to the base line and then jumped from this mark on to the bent backs of the boys forming the "Nag", the general idea being that their collective weight would bring about a total collapse of the line and its subsequent confusion of bodies, legs, and arms. Once the collapse had taken place the groups changed places. Occasionally two or more teams competed in this rough and always boisterous game.

LEAP-FROG, was another spirited game, which occasionally was also named "Fly" (with the meaning of clever or cunning). A line of several boys, each bent over forwards in a stooped position and hanging on to one another, was necessary, the rear lad being five or six feet away from a marked base-line. The arbiter of the game was known as "FLY". The participants ran forward to the baseline and from there jumped forward over the backs of the boys forming the bent-down frog. If they bungled their jump they attached themselves to the front of the so-called frog or became a member of another frog formed ahead. If in doubt a jumping contestant would call "I'll see Fly do it", a request that made it necessary for the arbiter to show his prowess. If he succeeded in his effort the caller had to crouch, and if "Fly" failed the latter had to crouch, another boy taking over his duties as "FLY".



**"TRAINS"**. This was a game of the infants playground and consisted of a chain gang of little boys, each holding the other's waist. The train often consisted of up to forty boys acting as trucks or carriages. The convenor usually took the place of the so important steam locomotive, usually with a smaller boy hanging on behind as a tender, not to be separated during the complicated shunting operations, one particular tender had the quaint nickname of Jimmy Goose. The "Engine" emitted loud puffing noises and shrill whistlings, emulating the "S" class locomotives which passed by on their lawful occasions along the Illawarra Railway, at the same time moving his elbows and arms horizontally in imitation of the coupling rods of his steamy namesake. The engine and its long train circumnavigated the playground at a fine turn of speed, pulling to a stop at the various seats along the route which formed excellent station platforms. At one place in the school yard two seats were fixed in close proximity to one another. This arrangement was availed of to form a representation of the Arncliffe Tunnel, whereby opposing groups of lads stood on the seats, facing to each other, and clasped hands over the intervening space. The "train" entered the tunnel with a loud whistle from the "engine", but the unfortunate carriage retinue had a hectic time with the buffeting they received from the arms and hands of the "Tunnel" boys who, strange to say, mostly let the "locomotive and tender" through unscathed. It may be mentioned that semaphore signals were dotted along the accepted route, being formed by specially appointed tall boys who held out an arm length at either the danger horizontal position, or the diagonal dropped "All clear" position, such signs were obeyed by the "locomotive" to the satisfaction of all concerned. The "terminus" of these trains still stands at 1972 marked by the low seat placed beneath the dark-leaved fig tree growing against the fence line in Railway Parade North. Nowadays one of the "locomotives" is a very senior railway historian associated with the Australian Railway Historical Society, old customs die hard.

Then there were the seasonal games which followed, one after another, in their ordered course, but just as to how each course was timed is one of the minor mysteries of youth. They comprised marbles, tops, hop-skotch, and kites, amongst other items. The marbles had three principal varieties insofar as playing games were concerned, viz - BIG RING. LITTLE RING. and POISON, in addition to FOLLY, the latter word being a corruption of FOLLOW, which was generally played when going to or coming from school.

#### SCHOOLBOY HOME ACTIVITIES IN TRANSPORT AND SCIENCE ETC.

**TELEPHONES.** The more scientific lads, using their father's hand tools to their great disadvantage, occasionally came to light with a telephonic device made from two empty jam tins, each with a small centrally placed hole pierced in the bottom cover by the application of a hammer and a nail. Threaded through these holes and held in place by a large knot, was a length of string measuring perhaps from ten to twenty feet. One boy held one tin and whispered into it, whilst the other boy, stretched the string taut and applied his tin to his ear. Long and somewhat vapid conversations were carried on in this manner in the quiet of Dad's Workshop. However, the telephonic system had no merit when another charging youth overlooked the string and brought the ear and mouthpieces to the ground, much to the annoyance of the telephonists.

JAM-TIN WALKING. Purely individual activities were also indulged in from time to time, such as walking slowly on top of a pair of jam-tins, the up-turned bottoms of which were pierced by two small holes, at opposite edges through which knotted strings, in the form of a long loop, passed upwards to hand level in order to keep the tins hard against the boots. This method of progress was extremely rowdy, therefore most satisfactory, and when two or three contestants came together there was usually an all in all melee to dismount the other fellow off his tins.

"STILTS". On occasion a lad would appear walking on a pair of home made stilts, an unsafe procedure at the best as these appurtenances were constructed from six foot palings, purloined from some unfortunate fence, with feet-blocks of wood insecurely nailed on at the desired height, the nails being invariably bent half-way in their length owing to amateur workmanship. Again there was always a rowdy attempt to push an opponent off his stilts and lay his protesting form along the dusty ground.

The foregoing essay is a partial record of the major activities of the lads in the early part of the present century, when each boy had to make his own fun without the benefit of commercial entertainment. No comparisons are drawn as to modern day youth, who live in quite another category of everyday events and are more than fully entertained. It is the intention of the authors to present a similar paper dealing with the playtime activities of the girls at the same early period.

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