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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe, 2205.  
April, 1974.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular Meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening April 19th, 1974, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: To be held over until the next meeting.

Syllabus Item: Dr. Morton Herman will give an Illustrated Address  
titled: "Very Early Colonial Architecture", beginning at 8 p.m. sharp.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Tournay, Captain, Mrs. Waddington, Mrs. Gow,  
Misses Russell and Row, Mrs. Prebble.

Ladies please bring a plate.

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Mr. D. Sinclair,

President

Phone 587 4555.

Mrs. E. Eardley,

Secretary

Phone 59 8078.

Mrs. E. Wright,

Treasurer

Phone 599 4884.

Mr. A. Ellis.

Research Officer

Phone 587 1159.

If you have two pennies, with the one you buy Bread, with the other you buy  
the flowers of the White Narcissus, for the one is food for the Body, and the  
other food for the Soul. Mahomet.

We are indeed indebted to Alderman Ron Rathbone who generously allowed the Society to reprint: - "A History of Carlton" which was written by him about 1963-1964. This book is most interesting and informative, and also very entertaining. Our thanks also to Mr. & Mrs. Day for their painstaking effort in typing each sequence of the book for reprint in the St George Historical Society's monthly Bulletin.

#### DATES TO REMEMBER:

The Social Secretary, Mrs. E. Wright, phone 599 4884, has arranged an Inspection of some of our lovely old Historic Churches, in and around the City, and a bus has been chartered for Saturday, April 20th. The following Churches have been chosen for this Inspection: -

St. Patricks Roman Catholic Church, Church Hill, Sydney.

St. Andrews Cathedral, George Street, Sydney.

St. Johns Church of England, Darlinghurst Road, Darlinghurst.

Date: Saturday, April 20th, 1974.

Time: 1.15 p.m. sharp. (Remember, the days are getting shorter.)

Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Cost: \$1.00 per person.

Afternoon Tea at Park at Double Bay, bring your own "Cuppa and Eats".

The following Social outings are being arranged, please give your support.

Date: Saturday, May 18th, 1974.

Time: 1.15 p.m. sharp.

Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Cost: \$1.00 per person.

On the above date, Saturday, May 18th, 1974, an Inspection of Vaucluse House. (each pay their own entry fee). Afternoon tea in the grounds.

#### Special Note

A Harbour Cruise, Saturday, September 20th, 1974, landing at Clark Island for Lunch, has also been suggested. Are you interested???

Please ring Mrs. Wright for above outings.

Canberra Week-end, October 5th, 6th, 7th, Details later.

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#### Items donated to "Lydham Hall "

Mrs. Watson: Marble Top Washstand - Circa 1887.

Corner Wall Whatnot. (No details).

Mr & Mrs. M. Todd: Carved Hallstand (Coat of Arms incorporated in  
Wolli Street,  
KINGSGROVE. Ceramic Tiles, late 1890's.

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## A HISTORY OF CARLTON, N.S.W.

by

R. W. RATHBONE.

## PART 6.

CARLTON AT ITS PEAK.

The years that followed saw Carlton as a business centre reach its zenith. An association known as the Associated Business people of Carlton was formed under the presidency of Mr. George Whittingstall, with Mr. Albert Lenehan as Secretary. This body of men led the agitation for better rail facilities and even sponsored the short lived Carlton Citizens' Band. The year, 1923, however, marked what was to be the end of yet another decade. In that year the first houses were lit by electricity ending the gas light era in which Carlton had grown to adulthood. In this year too the redoubtable J. G. Griffin died, respected and admired by his enemies as well as by his friends and mourned particularly by the people of Carlton whose interests he had served so well. 1923 also saw the demise of the Carlton-West Kogarah Voluntary Workers, who were now diverting their very considerable energies to the newly formed Carlton School Parents' and Citizens' Association, the revitalised Carlton-West Kogarah Progress Association and the newly established Carlton School of Arts Committee.

CARLTON SCHOOL PARENTS AND CITIZENS' ASSOCIATION.

Of these three organisations none prospered more than the first mentioned. Formed originally in 1918 under the presidency of Alderman W. F. Brown, these public spirited people raised phenomenal amounts of money during the twenties and thirties to make up the many deficiencies of the parsimonious Education Department. Two of its presidents will long be remembered, Mr. George Whittingstall and Mr. B. Elsworth, and some of its workers have records of service extending over three generations. In 1923 the nucleus of a school library was commenced with a gift of books by the children of the recently deceased Governor, Sir Walter Davidson.

CARLTON SCHOOL OF ARTS.

It is, however, the School of Arts which requires some detailed examination.

The building now known as the Carlton School of Arts was originally built as a commercial proposition by the Carlton Hall Company in the year 1900. For the first few years of its existence, it was a very popular dance hall until in 1902 it was converted for use as a cinematograph hall for the showing of silent pictures. In 1906 it became a billiard room but with the departure of so many local boys for the Front it became a liability. In 1923 it was purchased with money raised by the Carlton-West Kogarah Voluntary Workers and converted into a School of Arts. Its first president was Mr. T. Allen, brother of Sir Wigram Allen, of the Glebe, and Mr. E. O'Regan was its secretary. For many years it was the meeting place of the many lodges and friendly societies which existed in Carlton from the very earliest times - the Manchester Unity, Druids, Oddfellows, Protestant Alliance and Buffaloes, being some of the most prominent. Gradually the voluntary workers dropped out and for the next twenty years, Mr. John Whitmore and Mr. Harvey Duncan administered the building. The small weatherboard appendage at the rear of the present building was originally the office of Messrs. Berryman and Whittingstall, Estate Agents, and once stood on the corner of Mill Street and Carlton Parade.

The Carlton School of Arts was also the meeting place of the Carlton Debating Society which achieved no small measure of success during the twenties by winning the coveted Flanagan Shield four times in a row.

The second half of the twenties also opened with a bang. On August 10, 1925, the Illawarra Line as far as Hurstville was, after many delays, quadrupled and the next year it was electrified. This involved the erection of two additional platforms at Carlton and a considerable amount of alteration to the overhead bridge which had been resited from the Mill Street end in 1911.

#### THE ALABAMA ESTATE.

1926 also saw the final breakup of the Alabama Estate. This large holding of  $4\frac{1}{2}$  acres standing at the corner of Willison Road and Forest Road had passed from its original owner, Joseph Walker Bibby, to Mr. Ebenezer Glencross-Grant after being occupied for a short time by Mr. Harry Campbell Budge, G. M. G., Official Secretary to the Governor. Ebenezer Glencross-Grant was the General Manager for N. S. W. and Queensland of the agricultural implement manufacturing firm of Massey Harris Co. Ltd. He had arrived in Sydney from England via America in 1892. He was responsible for many improvements in farm machinery, particularly during the wet years of 1916 and 1917, when modifications suggested by him enabled millions of bushels of wheat to be salvaged from the flattened crops. He was chairman of a land syndicate at Barellan, a member of the board of the Randwick Benevolent Asylum, and a trustee of the Hurstville Methodist Church.

Mr. Grant spent large sums of money to renovate the property in the process of which the famous "fire extinguisher" tower, which leaked very badly was altered. Until Mr. Grant's retirement in 1926 this fine old home with its wisteria covered verandahs was the scene of lavish entertaining and numerous garden parties on the expansive croquet lawns.

In 1926, however, Alabama Avenue was surveyed and the whole Estate put up for auction. "Alabama" still stands complete with its 70 feet long attic, but shorn of its once distinguishing tower and hemmed in on all sides by suburban development.

#### BARWELL PARK.

During 1926 a number of allotments in various parts of Carlton which by now was the most thickly populated suburb south of Cook's River were acquired by the Bexley Council to alleviate the chronic shortage of playing areas for the district's children. Among those purchased was the nursery owned for many years by ex-Alderman Edward Edwards which stood between Bruce and Wallace Streets and which had until recent times been rented to Messrs. Byles and Martin for the growing of seedlings and carnations. Part of this area had also been the home for a brief period of Owen Mascord, a member of one of the oldest pioneer families in the St. George District. Owen Mascord had for some time been manager of Iliffe's Reserve Nursery in Croydon Road and was recognised as one of the area's most outstanding landscape gardeners.

This piece of land was officially opened on November 3, 1928, as Barwell Park and Botanical Reserve by the then Mayor Bexley, Ald. J. F. T. Barwell. For many years it was the responsibility of head-gardener, Mr. Leslie Lambert of Bruce Street, and under his constant care it became one of the beauty spots of the district.

The same year in a State-wide referendum Carlton voted 2,130 to 934 against the introduction of prohibition.

The boom conditions of these years saw Carlton being continually overshadowed by surrounding suburbs. Large shopping centres had grown up at Kogarah and Hurstville. The subdivision of the Preddey and Kinsela Estate in Bexley had shifted the focus of the Municipality from Carlton to Bexley. Hotels were built at Allawah and Bexley and Carlton began to feel for the first time the economic pinch.

Another notable event during these years was the closing down of the last of Carlton's dairies. These had become increasingly congested as the area became built up. Straying cattle continually damaged roads and footpaths and they had been under severe pressure from the authorities for some years. Apart from Toohey's Dairy in Cameron Street which has been mentioned elsewhere, that of Timothy Macnamara at the corner of Wallace Street and Willison Road is the best remembered.

One other chain of events during these years was followed with interest by the people of Carlton. This was a series of most exciting Creicket Test Matches in England and South Africa in which one of the stars was a former resident of Railway Street, Carlton. The great Jack Gregory is still recognised as one of the finest all-round cricketers ever to take the turf.

#### THE BUBBLE BURSTS.

In 1929 the bubble burst. Thousands of men were thrown out of work. Misery, hardship and despair settled on the area. Many of those people who were not unemployed were on short time and an Unemployment Relief Fund was opened. The only bright spot this year was the winning of the First Prize for the best school garden in N. S. W. by Carlton School - a silver cup, blue ribbon and £10 in hard cash.

It is extremely difficult to convey to a generation which grew up during the artificialities of war or the period of economic expansion and prosperity which followed it, the suffering and desperation of the years that were to follow.

The enterprise and fortitude shown by Carlton people during the crisis of the 90's was missing and in its place settled an air of gloom and resignation. By the end of 1931, 491 men were receiving unemployment relief in the Bexley Municipality, more than half of them in Carlton. By 1932, this figure had risen to 862. As the depression increased in intensity, the bailiff and the repossession agent made their appearance. Petty thieving and robbery plagued the area, and suicides caused by the threat of the debt collector of the hungry stares of little children were not unknown.

To relieve the desperation in so many homes, house to house collections of food, clothing and money were organised. Picnics were held and benefit concerts were the order of the day, performances by the Langlea Operatic Society and the St. George Mouth Organ Band being particularly memorable. Up to 80 grocery and meat orders per week were issued in Carlton when the depression was at its height.

To add to the general misery, the country suffered the throes of a disastrous drought, water being severely rationed in the metropolitan area.



### THE WEST KOGARAH DRAIN.

In the midst of all this occurred an event which in times of financial liquidity could not possibly be undertaken. On November 11, 1932, it was announced by the Unemployed Relief Council that a grant of £44,000 had been made available for carrying out the Muddy Creek Drainage System from Botany Street, Hurstville, to Princes Highway, Rockdale, to give employment to 300 men for one year. Thus the long sought construction of the West Kogarah Drain was commenced.

Almost as if to vent its disapproval of the decision, just after midnight on January 23, 1933, the drought broke,  $8\frac{1}{2}$  inches of rain falling in as many hours. The West Kogarah Creek came down in high flood as never before in living memory. Houses in Prospect Street were flooded to the windows, one being partly demolished. Percival Street was flooded to a depth of three feet. The Scouts' Hall at West Kogarah was completely submerged and a shed belonging to C.F. Gage and Sons, builders, was floated off its foundations.

### IN THE NEWS.

During these years Carlton disappeared from the columns of the local press and on the few occasions when it did get a mention, it was usually in the Kogarah Police Court where some resident or other had run foul of the law. Some of these cases are not without a certain amount of humour. On one occasion we read that one Persis Christie was put on a good behaviour bond of £20 for "unlawfully using a subtle craft, means or device viz cards, to deceive and impose upon Nellie Mooney."

Another occasion gives us an interesting insight into one of the most challenging mysteries of our civilization - the contents of a woman's purse - for we read that on September 25, 1932, an unemployed member of a well-known Carlton family was charged not with theft, but with having "robbed a lady of her handbag, a rabbit, a pair of gloves, a handkerchief, six frankfurts, four aspros and eightpence."

Whilst one resident of Fleet Street who bought a savage dog to protect his property from marauders was heavily fined when it bit the local policeman's son.

By 1934 the clouds had begun to lift and when the Prime Minister of Australia, the late J.A. Lyons, addressed a cheering election crowd of thousands in the Carlton Stadium - recently converted from the open-air Subway Picture Theatre, there was a definite note of optimism in the air.

### OF POLITICS AND PERSONALITIES.

The election of 1934 was of considerable interest to Carlton people for one of the candidates was Albert Charles Willis, of Bruce Street. Willis had recently returned from London where he had been Agent General for N.S.W. after a distinguished career in the Labour Movement which included the editorship of the Labour Daily. He was State President of the Party in 1922-25, and a member of the Legislative Council from 1925 to 1933, but despite this background and Carlton's decided sympathy for the cause he represented, he polled only 225 votes against 1780 for the sitting U.A.P. Member, Albert Lane.

1,456 for Eldridge, the State Labour Candidate. 481 for a Douglas Credit representative and 129 for a Communist. The thirties were a period of great political consciousness in Carlton. Branches of the State and Federal Labour Party, U.A.P., Douglas Credit and Communist Party thrived and at the Municipal election of 1932 a Communist team, whilst unsuccessful, attracted considerable support.

### THE REMAINING YEARS.

The remaining years of the thirties passed quietly - Carlton, after much speculation that it was going to be a newspaper stall, found it was to have the rather dubious distinction of being the first suburb in the St George District to get a Police Pill Box. Cameron Street was pushed through to Verdun Street. The Council unsuccessfully sought to close and sell Bent Street and a further application to establish a bus service from Carlton to Hurstville was refused. Milsop Street won the Council's prize for the best kept Street and Barwell Park for the most beautiful park.

The one great event of this period was the delicensing of the Royal Hotel in 1936 and its surplanting by a newer namesake on the other side of the line. After nearly fifty years of ministering to the needs of the inhabitants of the district, it had in later years fallen upon evil times. The high standards observed by the Mitchells in earlier days had not been maintained and during the late twenties and early thirties the hotel had become a constant scene of wild incidents, drunkenness, assaults and disorder. In 1926 it had become necessary to set up a Police Station in rented premises in Grey Street to cope with it. The building itself became neglected and dangerous, its cast iron balconies leaning crazily while the nine inch random rubble walls had become very shaky in places as the mortar deteriorated. The Short Street frontage had a noticeable bulge for nearly 32 feet of its length.

Although protests were made it was sentiment rather than conviction which motivated them.

When the building was subsequently converted into shops and flats one interesting sidelight emerged. During the reconstruction operations two stones were unearthed, one marked "A. C. Lifer" and the other "10 years M. L." Both were inscribed with the distinctive broad flat arrow which indicated the foundations had come from some convict built building erected elsewhere. The removal of the hotel sounded the death knell of Carlton as a shopping centre and despite often heroic attempts to revive it, it continues to languish to this day.

### PERSONALITIES OF THE THIRTIES.

During the thirties, three Carlton families which made outstanding contributions to literature, charity and education were in the spotlight.

The first of these was the Franklin family of Grey Street. In November, 1931, it was recorded that John Franklin, father of the authoress (Stella) Miles Franklin, had passed away at the age of 83. Miles Franklin had been writing since 1901 and two of her works, "My Brilliant Career" (1901) and "Old Blastus of Bandicoot" (1909) had caused considerable comment in the literary world. In 1936, however,

she achieved national recognition by winning the Prior Memorial Prize for her novel "All that Swagger". The next year she won the award for the Best Australian One-Act Play with "No Family", and in 1939 co-operated with Dymphna Cusack to write "Pioneers on Parade." This same year she shared the Prior Memorial Prize with Kate Baker for their biography of Joseph Furphy. Her last major work was "My Career Goes Bung", which she wrote in 1946, just four years before her death. Throughout her long and distinguished career she always looked on 26 Grey Street, Carlton, as her home.

1933 saw the death of another outstanding Carlton identity. This was Mr. Denis Haugh, for many years the President of the Central Council of the St. Vincent de Paul Society - a man who was greatly honoured by his Church for his work among the underprivileged in Surry Hills. He established St. Anthony's Home for Infants at Croydon and at the time of his death was its President as well as being Secretary of St. Margaret's Hospital in Sydney. Denis Haugh had married one of the daughters of J. G. Griffin.

The third of this trio received his recognition in happier circumstances. In 1938 Mr. G. Ross Thomas, B.A., of Fleet Street, Director General of Education in N.S.W. since 1930, was created a C.M.G.

He had started his long career as a pupil teacher in 1891, became deputy headmaster of Sydney Boys' High School in 1912, Headmaster of Bathurst High in 1914 and an Inspector of Schools in 1918. He was appointed Chief Inspector in 1929. As well as being Director-General of Education, G. Ross Thomas was a Senator of the Sydney University, Chairman of the Bursary Endowment Board, a Trustee of the Public Library and a member of the Board of the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital.

#### THE SECOND WORLD WAR.

By the end of 1939 the people of Carlton had other things on their minds. Australia was involved in another war - this time a war in which she would feel for the first time the impact of hostile shell-fire on her own shores. This time it was to be a life and death struggle for survival.

Early in 1940 the National Emergency Service was set up under Alderman A. N. McDonald as Chief Warden, Alderman T. Spanswick being in charge of the Carlton sector. This year also saw the commencement of the Bexley Patriotic Fund. House to house collections were organised, miles of pennies instituted. Appeals were held for British Bomb Victims and the mothers and sisters of 1914 - now the grand-mothers and aunts of 1940 threw themselves into the fray with much the same enthusiasm as before.

On December 1, 1941, Japan entered the war and by the middle of 1943 the Field of Operation had moved so close to our shores that the nation began to steel itself for what appeared to be imminent invasion. Air raid sirens made their appearance in 1942, back-yard shelters were constructed and air-raid trenches dug on every spare block of ground. Demonstrations against Italian shopkeepers were frequent and



unpleasant. In 1941, the blackout was introduced and fire-fighting demonstrations commenced. The bucket of sand and the stirrup pump became an essential part of every household. In 1942 a Branch of the Red Cross was formed in Carlton. Every able-bodied man was pressed into the services and those who were medically unfit or over age or employed in essential industries joined the Volunteer Defence Corps. Australia, the land of plenty, experienced its first taste of food and clothing rationing. First-aid classes were organised and the whole community geared to the winning of the war.

#### LIFE GOES ON.

In spite of an almost total pre occupation with the war, a number of interesting events took place in Carlton during these years. In 1940 the Hazeldine Hall in High Street became the El Rio Cabaret - Carlton's first and only night club. The El Rio Band was well received and for a brief period the bright lights of Broadway flickered in High Street before the blackout and lack of patronage caused its closure.

In 1941 a State General Election was held and amongst the new members elected, was William Matthew Currey, V.C., of Percival Street, who won the Kogarah Seat for the Labour Party and held it until his death in 1948. Currey had won the Victoria Cross in France in 1918 by single-handedly silencing a German field gun and despatching its crew.

In the same year Carlton voted overwhelmingly for the introduction of Wards into the Bexley Municipality and when the boundaries of these Wards were announced, Carlton found itself in the South Ward.

#### THE POST WAR YEARS.

On August 15th, 1945, the war was over and after the initial excitement and readjustment that comes with Peace, Carlton settled down into a richly reflective and useful old age. She remained quite indifferent to her absorption in the Rockdale Municipality in 1949, registered her ruffled indignation at an attempt to Town Plan her in 1954 and expressed considerable pleasure at a spate of new churches erected during the remainder of the fifties.

And so the small community which was born with the opening of the railway in 1884 to become the lusty infant of the nineties, the rebellious and impatient adolescent of the pre World War I era; the mature and purposeful adult of the twenties and thirties who gave birth to a number of newer, brusque and slightly brazen suburbs which have not completely overshadowed her, can, as she approaches her eightieth year look back with affection and considerable satisfaction of the efforts of the three generations she has nurtured - everyone of which was proud to call her its home.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.

To Miss Isabelle and Miss Florrie Mascord, Mr. Walter McConochie, Mr. Edward King, Miss Alice Chadwick, Mrs. Dorothy Soutter (nee Derwent), Mr. William Dominey, Mr. Charles Smith, Mrs. Olive Le Gros (nee Rate), Ald. David Griffin, the late Rev. W. Probert Phillips, Mrs. A.S. Newton, Mr. Patrick Toohey, Mr. David Knox, Mrs. Ethel Gray (nee Stringer), Mr. Arthur Stell, Mr. John Whitmore, Mr. Nelson Pope, Rev. R.U. Fullerton, Mrs. A. Cooper

and Mrs. R. Laurie, as well as a host of other Carlton residents, I would like to say a sincere thank you.

But most of all I would like to express my gratitude to the District Historian, Mr. Phillip Geeves and Mrs. Geeves for their constant encouragement and for checking this manuscript.

The End.

Transcription by (Mrs.) F. G. Day.