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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE, 2205
June, 1974.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular Meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, June 21st 1974, at 8 p m.

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

Business:

Syllabus Item: Mr Ken Tye will give an Illustrated Address on "Major Edmund Lockyer", Roadbuilder, 1784-1860.

Supper Roster: Mrs Day, Captain, and Mesdames O'Meara, Parkes, Gash and Johnson.

Ladies please bring a plate

Mr D. Sinclair,

President

Phone 587 4555

Mrs E. Wright,

Treasurer & Social Secretary

Phone 599 4884.

Mrs E. Eardley,

Hon. Secretary.

Phone 59 8078

Mr. A. Ellis,

Research Officer.

Phone 587.1159.

"Every time we laugh we add something to our fragment of life".

Sterne

It is with regret that we record the passing of Mrs. Anne Holloway and Mr Vince Saunders, both of whom were Members of the Society for very many years.

Special Note.

A Harbour Cruise September 20th. 1974, landing at Clark Island for lunch has been suggested. ARE YOU INTERESTED??? Our Social Secretary, Mrs. Wright, finds it most difficult and disappointing when endeavouring to arrange outings for the pleasure of the Members. The lack of support, and lack of interest is not encouraging for future Social Excursions. In the past we have had some lovely trips hither and yon, can't we revive the interest?????? Canberra Week-end October 5th, 6th, 7th, 1974. Deposits at next meeting, please. Details later. Please notify Secretary of any change of address.

Society Books Number 5 & 6 available, also Society Badges.

Mrs. Watson has donated numerous bits and pieces, all of great value and interest, to "Lydham Hall". These will be enumerated at a later date.

A Special Appeal is being made for the following. Will you check your little "Bottom Drawer", you might have some of these tucked away, forgotten:-

ENGLISH WILLOW PATTERN CHINA such as:

Salt and Pepper pots

Milk Jugs.

Tea Pots. or any odd pieces of English Willow Pattern China?

Old style men's or ladies' hats to hang on the beautiful Hallstand

Walking Cane (Period Style)

Umbrella, Hook handle (Period Style)

Any of the above will be greatly appreciated to display at "Lydham Hall", which is now looking very lovely. Have you been up there lately? It is well worth a visit.

Syllabus Items

July 19th, Election of Officers. At conclusion Mr Don Sinclair will give an address.

August 16th Mr Bill Bayley - Travels in Historical Research Illustrated.

September 20th Mr Vaughan Evans - River Steamers of the Murray and Darling Illustrated.

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THE HAMLET KNOWN AS "THE GLEN", WEST ARNCLIFFE

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

A tiny hamlet, known locally as "The Glen", was virtually an isolated farming settlement located to the south of the "Village of Arncliffe" and rested sleepily in its hollow between the shallow western slopes of Arncliffe Hill and the rugged bush-clad escarpment ranged along the southern crest of Mount Bardwell. Several small farms and orchards were located on the north-western side of The Glen Road and clustered side by side along the alluvial banks of Stoney Creek (now Bardwell Creek) to be sure of a permanent water supply which was so essential for the horses, cows and "the pigs which paid the 'rint'."

Stoney Creek was, in the early days a pellucid stream which had its headwaters within the grounds of the old established "Bessborough" property owned by the Preddy family. This estate, long since divided into housing allotments, and also the well-kept Bexley Park, lay between Forest Road and Stoney Creek Road. The course of the stream flowed northwards passing through sandstone country although grazing paddocks and slaughter yards engendered a measure of pollution in its upper reaches. However, when the stream turned eastwards, it passed by a neat little cottage on its northern bank, today marked by a magnificent English Oak tree, and then beneath the Jubilee Bridge which carried the old Kingsland Road across the gulch of the waterway. Also on the northern bank but at a higher level, was Mr. William Pendlebury's double-fronted weatherboard cottage secluded within a wilderness of tea-tree, and now long since demolished.

Below the waters of Stoney Creek meandered tranquilly through beautiful bushland beneath an overhang of Lilly-pilly trees (*Eugenia Smithii*) and stately Blue-gums, whilst maidenhair fern grew abundantly along the banks, and the shaded floor of the valley was covered with a wealth of "Wandering Jew", forming a dark green carpet. The place was the habitat of "Coach-Whip" birds, and furtive Red and also Yellow-breasted Robins, and the smaller finch tribes were without number.

A short distance away to the south of the stream and at the base of the sandstone hillside was a deposit of red ochre which was mined in quantity for several years for local domestic use in the decorating of front-door steps and fire-place surrounds etc. It has been related that this earthy mineral, consisting of clay and hydrated oxide of iron, was also exported in barrels to America. No doubt the aboriginal tribes in the days of yore also knew of its value for personal adornment.

This section of the later named Bardwell Valley was locally known to generations of schoolboys as "The First Gully", to differentiate it from "The Second Gully" through which the Wolli Creek found its willow-clad way. Unfortunately this once beautiful area was taken over by golfing enthusiasts and almost completely devastated to form a golf-course, portion of the stream flowing through two eight foot diameter concrete pipes, and the valley levelled by countless tons of household rubbish, an attraction for thousands of sea-gulls, and the bull-doing of out-jutting rocky spurs. With a little advanced thought this golf-course could have rivalled the natural beauty associated with the picturesque area controlled by the Pennant Hills Golf-Club, west of Beecroft.

Before reaching the present day intersection of Pile Street, the stream entered the pig-farming property, owned by Jack Rasmussen, who resided in a small double-fronted brick cottage with a weatherboard out-shut at the rear and listed as No. 73 The Glen Road. This place has been

demolished and is now marked by a weed-grown heap of rubble, although the high hedge, bordering Pile Street, of Big-leaved Privet still remains in a forlorn condition and is frequented by a large flock of Indian Minah birds, ground-feeders with raucous voices. The farmstead was noted for its conglomeration of poultry enclosures, pig-pens and pig wallows situated in the short tributary, known as Springey Creek, which flowed from the heights of the nearby Jubilee Park. These wallows were pools of mud and slush, most comforting for the porkers but to humans they stank to high heaven. Food for the live-stock of the farm was garnered daily by horse and cart from various restaurants and the fruit and vegetable markets of the city area. On arrival at the farm the scraps and waste vegetable matter was dumped into a one hundred gallon boiling vat, a remarkably fine cast-iron cauldron, which often gave off most savoury odours, but there were times when one kept one's distance.

Immediately west of the farmhouse and included in the property, the Stoney Creek opened out into a deep pool which gained the name of "Ducky" from the local youths and was highly popular for nude swimming during the hotter months of the year, much to the annoyance of Mr. Rasmussen. This gentleman had his own brusque methods of handling the intruders and at times the local constable, a forthright Irishman named Bob Dunsworth, had a hand in their dispersal, providing he could catch them amidst the nearby scrub-covered and rocky terrain. When the pool was vacated, and the immediate surroundings quiet, the Black Ducks moved in and the water-hens found pleasure in cruising on the placid surface of the pond, seeking edible tid-bits lurking in the reeds and overhanging vegetation which lined the brush-clad banks and included bushes of the delicate pink-flowered Dogrose (*Bauera rubioides*) and Sydney Golden Wattle (*Acacia longifolia*).

Adjacent to the Rasmussen property and at the short extension of Pile Street north of its intersection with The Glen Road, a narrow footbridge constructed of cross-boards nailed to a pair of long logs, spanned Stoney Creek, a structure which was often washed away in floods and had to be replaced from time to time. From the handrails of the bridge a good overhead view could occasionally be had of sinuous eels swimming lazily beneath, together with numbers of tiny pencil-shaped "Butter-fish" which darted here and there at great speed. The place was also noted for its beautiful blue-winged dragon-flies which, no doubt, did not appreciate being wrongly called "Horse-stingers".

From the northern side of the footbridge a bush path crossed the unmade but lovely named Sunset Avenue to scramble steeply over and up rocks to gain the eastern summit plateau of Mount Bardwell in the vicinity of the present-day southern extension of Lambert Road. The spur traversed by this unformed path was covered in spring-time by masses of indigenous wild, or should we say, Australian flowers of the Hawkesbury Sandstone area, all of great interest to the botanist. There were large bushes of yellow and orange pea-shaped blooms of the "Eggs and Bacon" (*Dillwynia ericifolia*), Native Fuschia (*Epacris longiflora*) the white flowered and sweet-smelling "Wedding Bush" (*Ricinus pinifolius*), together with a host of other beautiful bushland gems. There were also blue-tongued lizards, tiger, and black snakes to be occasionally seen and avoided.

It is of interest to mention that there was a proposal to erect a high level bridge across the Bardwell Valley, as marked by the length of Pile Street, in conjunction with the then projected subdivision of the Mount Bardwell Estate, and to attract prospective buyers a portion of the northern approach was laid with the huge stones. It was also the intention of the vendors to arrange for the provision of a steam tramway, branching off the

Arncliffe to Bexley line at the intersection of Pile Street with Forest Road. Unfortunately these schemes were not implemented and the occupiers of the half dozen or so brick cottages erected against Bardwell Road and Lambert Road led a solitary and somewhat isolated existence for a great many years.

Avoiding mention of more recent housing development and proceeding eastwards along the course of the aptly named "The Glen Road", the second of the old-time farmhouses has been "modernised", insofar as its facade is concerned, and is nowadays marked as No. 67 and appropriately named "The Glen". This place was formerly occupied by Charles Clishold, a poultry farmer who was also interested in keeping a few pigs. About 1905 this property, spread over six blocks, was purchased by Frank Leonard Swennson who established a dairy-farm and, with the help of his family, built up a local milk-vending round amongst the residents of West Arncliffe in particular, until such time as the Milk Board saw fit to insist that such dairies be closed in the best interests of the city-based monopolies.

Mr. Swennson established a herd of some seventyfive cows which browsed by day amidst the western valley grass and scrub lands, returning in the evening to the shippens for milking. They drank the waters of Stoney Creek and chewed the cud contentedly in the dense shade of the casually grouped gum-trees, remnants of the old-time forest. Insofar as the swine were concerned, these animals were taken by horse dray to Messrs. Hutton's factory at Canterbury and reappeared as the famous "Don't argue. Hutton's Pineapple Brand Hams and Bacon are the best". Others made the longer journey to the Flemington Saleyards, there to meet their fate at other hands. An outbreak of swine-fever brought the pig-raising industry in this area to a close, the disease being brought about, so it was said, by contaminated water flowing down the creek from the slaughter-yards operating in the vicinity of the Stoney Creek Road.

The next farmhouse, named "ROSE PINE" and nowadays as No. 53 The Glen Road, was occupied by Mr. W. Rose, a poultry farmer, and was of double-fronted brick design with central hallway and side enclosures to the narrow-fronted verandah, the galvanised iron roof of which was painted in alternative red and white bands. The property extended northwards to the banks of Stoney Creek. Then came a large agricultural area farmed by Mr. Keeds who resided in a galvanised iron cottage of primitive aspect against the southern bank of Stoney Creek and facing towards the northern end of Wilson's Road. The property was cultivated as a market garden and orchard, and had a long row of water-loving quince trees along the bank of the waterway. As a sideline, he was also interested in raising poultry.

Mr. Keeds was responsible for planting a splendid row of Weeping Willow trees (*Salix babylonica*) along the southern bank of the stream between Wilson's Road and Pile Street. Unfortunately, these trees, in spite of local protest, were wantonly destroyed by some iconoclast. We agree wholeheartedly with Cicely Wylie in her statement that only "a psychologist might be able to explain the reason for man's joy in cutting things down. Maybe it releases some pent-up emotions". Mr. George Baker succeeded Mr. Keeds in the ownership of this property, which in later days was subdivided into housing allotments.

Down stream from the end of Wilson's Road the Stoney Creek left its willow-fringed bank and entered a circular-shaped marsh, known as Fletcher's Pool, of no great extent, from which it left, in the most inconsequent fashion, to form a reverse loop before turning northwards to flow over the

one-time water-splash where Arncliffe Street (now Bardwell Road) crossed its course. This shallow crossing was later replaced by a timber bridge, which in turn was replaced by one of concrete that did duty until the road was widened in 1973 when a pair of huge concrete pipes, laid side by side, carried away the waters of the then diverted creek channel.

Against the southern side of Bardwell Road and adjacent to the western side of Stoney Creek was a Chinese market garden which also bordered Fletcher's Pool, the haunt of frogs, Egrets, Blue Herons and, during the hours of darkness, the cautious Nankeen Night Herons. The Chinese gardeners resided in a typical shanty of galvanised iron, erected in their inimitable manner by rule-of-thumb methods, without benefit of plumb-bobs, spirit levels, or tin snips, placed on higher ground level to avoid seasonal floods, in the vicinity of Sunset Avenue. Nearby stands the tree-embowered residence of Mr. Joseph Palmer, a gentleman related to the Lambert family of Mount Bardwell and one who "did not cultivate trespassers".

Also on the southern side of Bardwell Road but adjacent to the eastern side of Stoney Creek was a four-square cottage standing isolated on a small grassy knoll well above flood level. This place was formerly occupied by Mr. Richards and, in succession by Edward Gower and also by Mr. Stockley, who ran dairy cattle on the enclosed property which is now subdivided into housing allotments, many with frontages facing towards Shepherd Parade, a street opened with the subdivision.

North of Bardwell Road the original bed of the creek has recently (1973) been diverted to follow a straight channel, bull-dozed in the best engineering manner, across the grassed Shepherd Paddock which is destined to serve as a public park, thus creating an annoyance to the small ponies and the solitary donkey which graze thereon. Passing beneath the dividing fence the stream gurgles through a dense patch of willow-trees before passing beneath the now abandoned bridge at the western end of Hannam Street which once gave access to the ancient cottage known as "HILLSIDE" which was demolished several years ago in the interests of a housing developmental scheme. The stream, still covered by willows, then passed beneath the bridge carrying the East Hills Railway to mingle with the deep waters of Wolli Creek where, once upon a time, a woolwash was established on the former Curtis property.

Having thus traced the course of Stoney Creek we return to the environs of Wilson's Road and at its northern end and on the eastern side there is a small weatherboard cottage once occupied by Mr. William Fletcher who had interests in a piggery on the southern side of Wolli Creek, which later came into the hands of Otto Smith. Mr. Fletcher was deeply interested in the gathering of blackberries for sale purposes in his spare time. Nearby, and also on the southern side of Wilson's Road, is a unique shed, built by Mr. Locker on the ancient "A" frame principle and covered from its apex to ground level, on both sides, with diamond pattern fibro slates, which would date the edifice to the period of the nineteen-twenties. The gabled ends of the structure are of vertical boarding with double half (Dutch) doors at the western end.

It is evident that The Glen Road, from near its intersection with Wilson's Road, was subsequently extended north-eastwards as Pitt Street, from which Shepherd Parade left in a northerly direction to link with Bardwell Road.

In former times access to The Glen hamlet was from Wollongong Road (then known as Illawarra Road) via East Street, then a bush track which

wended its way south-westwards through de-forested country amidst a wilderness of tea-tree and blackthorn scrub, which extended in one unbroken mass from the southern side of The Glen Road to Fripp Street. With more recent subdivisions and new street alignments East Street, east of its intersection with Parliament Terrace (now Lorraine Avenue) was renamed Athelstane Avenue, whilst the western section leading to The Glen retained its original name, and as a very narrow thoroughfare descended somewhat steeply into the valley of Stoney Creek to serve its small hamlet of farmhouses and the inhabitants thereof.

The authors are indebted to Mr. Frank Leonard Svennson (Junior) and the late Albert Carlson for much of the subject matter incorporated in this essay.

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