ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,

Arncliffe. 2205.

September, 1974.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, September 20th, 1974, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Mr. Vaughan Evans, Founder of the Thames Ship Lovers Society, will give an Illustrated address on the "River Steamers of the Murray and the Darling".

Supper Roster: Mrs. Tournay, Captain, Mrs. Waddington, Miss Russell, Miss Row, Mrs. Gow.

Ladies please bring a plate.

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

Habits are at first cobwebs, then cables. (Spanish Proverb)

DATES TO REMEMBER.
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The following Social Outings are being arranged for your pleasure.

Our Social Secretary, Mrs. Wright will appreciate your support.

Date: Saturday, September 21st. 1974.

Meeting Place: No.4 Jetty, Circular Quay.

Time: 2 p.m.

Cost: $1.00 per person, (With recent increase, the
                                  charge may be a little more.)

The above particulars refer to -"A Harbour Ferry Cruise." The
Ferry leaves No.4 Jetty, Circular Quay at 2.30 P.M., returning at
4.45 p.m. (approximately) Refreshments available on board, or
you may prefer to bring your own.
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   " A FULL DAY TRIP TO KURRAJONG HEIGHTS AND THERE ABOUTS."
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Date;   Saturday, October 26th. 1974

Meeting Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Time: 9 Oclock a.m.

Cost: $2.00 per person.
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Canberra Weekend October 6th 7th 8th.   Deposits please, full amount
if convenient at September meeting; full details will be givenby
Social Secretary.
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We take pleasure in announcing that Book number "7", published by
the St.George Historical Society, entitled: "Early History, Tempe
and The Black Creek Valley,"written and illustrated by Mr. Gifford
Eardley, is now available at a cost of $1.00 - postage 15¢ extra.
Copies may be purchased from the Hon. Secretary, phone 59.8078,or
from Miss Otten at "Lydham Hall" at weekends.
Books numbers 5 & 6 are still available,reprints of numbers 1-2-3-& 4
will be ready at an early date.
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Recent Acquisitions

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

Miss B. Thomas, Forest Road, Bexley.	Willow Pattern Vegetable Dish _ 130years old
Mrs. E. Faulkner, Miranda.	On Loan - Hand made Madapolin Nightgown(1889)
Miss Porter, Carlton.	Cedar Wash stand with marble top.(embossed) CrockeryWater Bucket with Cane handle. 2 large Stoneware Salt Jars. Pair very old brown Leggings, together with numerous other small items.
Mrs. Parker, Carlton.	6 fancy Hat Pins, 2 glass (finger) salt dishes. 1"Shot" glass Sweet Dish.

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Vale.

Since our last meeting the Society has suffered the sad loss of two Members.   Mrs. Thelma Hayman,of Hillpine Avenue,Kogarah , and Mr.A. Evans,Kinsel Grove, Bexley.

Mrs. Hayman was a regular attendant at our meetings and she will be sadly missed.   She was keenly interested in local history, and wrote articles on the lives of some of the early Pioneers of the District, sparing no effort in her research of factual happenings.   These Historical papers were duly published in the monthly Bulletin.   To Mr. Hayman and Family we offer our deepest sympathy.

Mr. A. Evans,of Bexley unfortunately was unable to attend the meetings but, as a keen Historian read and appreciated the monthly Bulletin. To the Family we extend our deepest sympathy.

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GIFFORD AND EILEEN EARDLEY.

The small township of Pitt Town, listed as one of the five "Macquarie Towns" of the upper Hawkesbury River district, has been settled by a farming community since the earliest days of the Crown Colony of New South Wales. The main portion of the village is grouped, above flood level, on the upper slopes of a shallow grassed hill at a distance of about four miles to the north-east of the larger town of Windsor, the two places being divided by the winding waters of the Hawkesbury River, as represented by Wilberforce Reach and York Reach and also by the oftimes turbulent South Creek which junctions nearby with the main stream.

The area generally, in its earliest days, was known as Green Hills and would appear to date from about 1794, when, under the jurisdiction of Lieut-Governor Major Grose, some twenty-two settlers were established along the banks of the Hawkesbury and its tributary streams. Grants issued between 1800 and 1804 concerned Messrs. Arndell (600 acres), Benn, Biggers, Hobbs, Jones, Mc Daniel, Palmer, Smallwood, Stogdell and Wilbow. As the Hawkesbury River was subject to calamitous flooding, Governor Macquarie decided to divide the whole of the settled area into five townships, each ranged along the crest of its adjacent hill, a circumstance calculated to keep residences and granaries etc. above the reach of floodwaters.

The sub-division of the Nelson Common area resulted in the township of Pitt Town being formed, the various town allotments being an integral and inseparable part of the low-lying farming allotment, insofar as the legalities were concerned, although the two portions may have been miles apart. Incidentally the place name, Pitt Town, was derived from William Pitt, an English statesman of repute.

There is a particularly lush agricultural area, known as the Pitt Town Bottoms, occupying a shallow basin, subject to back-flooding, between Pitt Town and Windsor, in the centre of which, even to-day, is a marshy lagoon, the occasional haunt of pelicans and other marsh feeding birds. This shallow lagoon occasionally dries out and is then used, when the grass grows, for agistment purposes. These lands are very rich and have been intensely cultivated from the earliest times of the colony, their fertility being renewed from time to time by the periodical immersions. Floods have been known to reach a depth of sixty feet as judged by the normal river level. East of Pitt Town there is cattle grazing country embracing the region of Cattai Creek where a ribbon development of small farm cottages has occured along the road to Maroota and Wiseman's Ferry. Beyond the grazing lands is a huge eucalyptus forest, spread over the undulating Hawkesbury Sandstone belt, poor land which is still largely undeveloped.

The first means of communication with Sydneytown was by means of small sized sloops, cutters and schooners, which sailed over the river system to Broken Bay and from thence along the oft times stormy coast to Port Jackson. With the formation about 1798, of the Old Windsor Road which passed near to the village of Seven Hills on its way to Parramatta and onwards to Sydney, via the Great Western Road, it was possible to follow this route by horse or horse-drawn vehicle. In 1805 there was a regular coach service which ran three times a week, the journey to Sydney costing seven shillings and sixpence and the trip occupied some sixteen hours under average conditions. This covered conveyance would be joined by the residents of Pitt Town at

Gifford and Eileen
                                                          Eardley.

Mc Grath's Hill, a half a mile or so south of the South Creek Bridge near
Windsor.

The construction of the Government Railway between Blacktown and Rich-
mond, which opened for traffic on December 1st., 1864, brought great changes
to the transport arrangements of the district at large and meant the dis-
appearance of much of the river-borne trade, as well as the horse coaching
and cartage services. The nearest railway station to Pitt Town was named
Mulgrave, to which a roadway, some three quarters of a mile in length, was
extended from the junction of the Pitt Town Road with the Windsor Road at
Mc Grath's Hill.

This latter hamlet was meanioned in 1833 as being the site of the hill-
top residence of Mr. Mc Grath, an early settler of the district. The slab-
sided cottage, of primitive construction, was placed well above the reach
of flood-waters and was one room in width and two rooms in length. In its
original condition, the roof was covered with wooden shingles of silver-grey
colour giving a surface full of uneveness which was most attractive with its
play of slight shadows when seen in the sunlight. However, with the efflux-
ion of time, it was found necessary to super-impose sheets of galvanised
corrugated iron over the little hip roof, "an economic boon but an aesthetic
tragedy." Close by the site of the tiny cottage and erected on the same
hillock, is a large two-storied barn, of the characteristic "Hawkesbury"
pattern, with vertically placed split wooden slabs forming the walls.
This edifice is still in use although its structural members appear to be
somewhat tottery. In recent years, the former Mc Grath homestead, after
lying derelict for several years, was dismantled. It is understood that the
Mc Grath family migrated to the Emu Plains area about the beginning of the
present century.

Before commencing our journey to Pitt Town, it may be of interest to
describe the few buildings, both domestic and those catering for the needs of
the rural community and the passing road traffic. Details of the early years
are fragmentary but in 1878, it was recorded that three hotels were in bus-
iness at Mc Grath's Hill, namely the "Australian", the "Royal Oak" and the
"Killarney Inn." The last two establishments were opened in 1853 and were
closed through the enactments of the License Reduction Act of 1911. The
"Australian", although listed in 1878, may have been closed for a period
before it was re-opened about 1896 when the license was transferred from
the "Maid of Australia" at Pitt Town, of which more anon. The premises of
the "Australian" faced towards the Pitt Town Road and were built of brick
in two-storied fashion common to the 1880 period. Although still in use
for residential purposes, the building has been supplemented by more modern
premises erected on the corner against the western wall of the older building.
It is thought that the "Royal Oak" was sited immediately south of the Mc Grath
property on land that is now occupied by a service station for motorists.

North of the "Australian" Hotel was a large barn which has long been
demolished, its site to-day being marked by the round-topped covering of its
adjacent well. Nearby was the former blacksmith's shop of Mr. Mc Quire,
the ramshackle forge building may have found its original use as a farm-
house as it possessed a large "outside" brick chimney obviously intended for
domestic cooking purposes. Then came the intersection of a narrow laneway,
known, somewhat grandiloquently, as High Street, beyond which, towards Windsor,

PITT TOWN   (Contd.)   Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

is a small cottage beset with a range of additions at the rear and disting-
uished by two separate but adjacent brick chimneys, the flue sections of
which lean in their length towards the cottage roof in rather an alarming
manner.   Another rural laneway is now met, known as Beddeck, or Bedder
Street, a short thoroughfare that leads eastwards to grazing lands and once
had, on its northern side, a remarkable slab-sided cottage, roofed with rusty
iron.   The cracks or joints, between the planks of the slab-sided walls were
covered with slivers of iron of all manner of shapes and sizes, some wide and
some narrow, but all calculated to keep out the wind and the rain.   The
space between the two rooms of the main cottage and the once separated
cottage had been covered with a "lean-to" roof and side walls added to afford
extra room accommodation, possibly for a growing family.   The kitchen, at
the side of its back entrance doorway, had a brick-built chimney of fantastic
proportions and, judging by a small window opening tucked beneath the eaves
of the end gables, there may have been an upper floor beneath the once shin-
gled roof which had later been covered with galvanised iron.   The place,
with its yard protected against bovine intrusion by a wondrous fence strung
together of bits and pieces of wire fastened where possible to rough hewn and
awry positioned posts, was a fine example of the primitive living conditions
associated with some of the early settlers of the area.   When sketched in
1956 the cottage was still occupied and its unkept appearance at this year
certainly was of more interest to artists than architects.   The eastern end
of Beddeck Street was connected by another laneway, really a passage between
wire fences, which joined with the eastern end of High Street before making
a junction with the Pitt Town Road.   The hamlet of Mc Grath's Hill, in
addition to the edifices mentioned, had claim to fame in the erection of four
circular shaped concrete silos, said to be the first of their type in Australia
These landmarks stand amidst a clutter of wayside stalls dealing in fruit,
vegetables and honey, spread along the verge of the Pitt Town Road in front
of the "Australian" Hotel.

     Leaving the "Silo Corner" in a north-easterly direction, the Pitt Town
Road passes between extensive paddocks now utilized for the grazing of cattle.
A fine view of the township of Windsor, covering its fifty feet high elevation
with its cluster of buildings huddling above flood-level, can be seen to the
north of the roadway, together with the willow-fringed windings of South Creek
as a fore-ground.   Nearby, in the same direction and also located on the
crest of its fifty foot contour, lies the ancient cottage named "SPRING HILL",
the home of the old-established Johnson family.   The house is set amidst
tree-covered grounds and encompassed by wide verandahs and a number of
additions to its fabric which have been made over the years.   The shuttered
small-paned windows are a delight, likewise the tall and sturdy chimneys which
project in all manner of unlikely places.   It is understood that its former
shingled roof was replaced by corrugated iron during the Eighteen-Eighties.

     The barn at "Spring Hill" is a huge creeper-covered structure of split-
slabs, intermixed with patches of corrugated iron, which came into use in
later years as a storage repository for discarded cedar furniture, intermixed
with chaff-bags, poultry droppings, old tins, bottles and out-of-use farm
equipment.   There were cedar planks lying higgle-de-piggledy on the floor
or against the inner walls, which once formed the panelling of the rooms of
"Spring Hill", no doubt replaced by more modern wall surfaces.   Several years
ago an auction sale was held of the contents of the barn and great joy was
brought to the hearts of the avid bidders, particularly those with a yen for
the beauty of old cedar furniture and the pleasure of repolishing same to its

PITT TOWN   (CONTD.)   Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

former reddish lustre.

On the southern side of the Pitt Town Road a section of the grass lands
has been subdivided into modern housing allotments, set off by a dense
forest of gum-trees as a sombre background, amidst which the small settlement
of Oakville is located.   Also to be seen in this direction is the large two-
storied mansion named "KILLARNEY LAKES", an edifice that has its name perpet-
uated in the adjacent Killarney Chain of Ponds, a tributary of South Creek,
which drains the countryside as far south as Vineyard.   Crossing this creek
the Pitt Town Road ascends the gentle slopes of a low hillock with the Pitt
Town Common ranged along its southern verge.   The former weather-board
cottage of Norb Pendergast was placed near the eastern end of the Common and
had a fine backing of forest trees.   The huge kitchen chimney obviously had
a hearth which would have been wide enough to roast the proverbial ox.   It is
unfortunate that the cottage has recently been destroyed by fire.

Over the crest of the hillock, the crossway intersection of Old Pitt
Town Road, now known as Saunder's Road and its northern continuation named
Pitt Town Bottoms Road, is met.   This cross thoroughfare is evidentally of
great age and with many twists and turns, led from Nelson Road and its farm-
ing communities to the long-established row of farm-houses ranged between the
eastern bank of Wilberforce Reach of the Hawkesbury River and the fertile low-
lying lands of the Pitt Town Bottoms and from thence to the punt crossing of
York Reach which once gave access to the "Macquarie Town" of Wilberforce.

East of the Old Pitt Town Road intersection stands the forge and smithy
of Samuel Huxley, the building being constructed of vertically placed wooden
slabs topped by a roof of galvanised iron, all, nowadays, in a shaky condition
when hit by gusts of wind and rain storm.   Mr. Huxley still plies his time-
honoured trade and is widely known throughout the Hawkesbury area.   It is no
uncommon sight to see several horses tethered beneath the front verandah awning
patiently waiting their turn to be fitted with new iron footwear.   Across the
way from the forge, on the northern side of the Pitt Town Road, is a large two-
storied house named "LINWOOD", said to have been built about 1838.   This resid-
ence is typical of the period and from its hill-top vantage point a wide view
northwards can be seen, with the township of Wilberforce in the distance, the
windings and reaches of the Hawkesbury in the mid-distance and the extensive
flats of the Pitt Town Bottoms immediately below.   It has been said, but not
verified, that the course of the Pitt Town Road passed by the northern frontage
of "LINWOOD" in the days of yore.

The Pitt Town Road, east of "LINWOOD" makes a wide curve to the north,
followed by a sharp turn to the north-west, to enter the precincts of Pitt
Town and its ribbonlike development of small cottages constructed within
recent years.   However, there is one old home in particular which hides its
presence behind a row of weeping-willow trees and faces southwards away from the
adjacent roadway.   This cottage is very small and its only distinguishing
feature is its fat-breasted brick chimney placed outside its walls.   Here-
abouts the Pitt Town Road changes its title to Bathurst Street and as such
serves what may be regarded as the main thoroughfare of the "Macquarie Town"
of Pitt Town.   The continuation northwards of Bathurst Street gains the name
of Punt Road, leading, as the name implies, to the punt crossing at York Reach
and the road to Wilberforce.

(To be continued.)