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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24th Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205
February, 1975.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, 21st February, 1975, at 8 p.m.
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.
Business: General.
Syllabus Mr. and Mrs. Day will share with us another "European
Item: Journey."
Supper Miss Dunsmore, Captain, and Mesdames McMillan, Lee,
Roster: McDonald, Misses Cheetham and Callister.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,
President
Phone - 587 4555

Mrs. E. Eardley
Secretary
Phone - 59 8078

Mrs. E. Wright,
Hon. Treasurer & Social Secretary.
Phone 599 4884

Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer
Phone - 587 1159

"As long as shooting is classified as "Sport" senseless destruction
will continue."

GIFFORD HENRY EARDLEY.

A TRIBUTE.

In every community there is some individual who stands apart as its conscience and its soul; some person whose sheer love of the area in which they have spent almost all their life causes them to stand apart; someone whose deep concern for their surroundings has forced them to watch it change with nostalgia and regret.

Such a man was Gifford Eardley, who spent his early years in Kogarah and resided for nearly half a century on a rocky outcrop overlooking most of Arncliffe and the Wolli Creek and Bardwell Valleys.

A man who loved people; steam engines; old houses - no matter how dilapidated; every leaf of every tree and every bird which sheltered in them and a man who was not prepared to watch the progressive despoiling of the things he valued without putting pen to paper in protest.

But a practical man who, through his ability to sketch and a delightful turn of phrase, was able to record for posterity so many scenes which can never be recaptured.

And a man with an abiding faith in his Maker and a passion for all that He had created.

Gifford Henry Eardley - Patron and former President of the St. George Historical Society; gifted artist; storyteller and raconteur; historian extraordinary; humanitarian; rebel; and much loved friend - is dead, but the pleasure he gave to all who knew him will live on through his sketches and his writings and the countless happy memories which those of us who were privileged to call him our friend will always treasure.

Alderman R. W. Rathbone,
Co-Patron,
St. George Historical Society.
January 1975.

"THE VALLEY". A HAMLET OF OLD-TIME TEMPE, NEW SOUTH WALES

Gifford and Eileen Hardy.

To continue the narrative dealing with the story of the lower portion of Wollie Creek, as described in the St. George Historical Society's Bulletin of November, 1974, the authors now deal with the lower fresh-water section of that stream commencing from the outer end of the tidal influence, marked by its under-shelving banks of exposed sandstone. The confluence, without any turbulence, is indicated by a dense growth of bull-rushes (Cumbunga) through which the fresh-water, except at flood-time, sluggishly seeps through a mass of sword-like leaves and rotting vegetation.

These Bull-rushes, which grew in such abundance along the water margins were of great commercial value, their long green leaves being cut to water-level and taken at yearly intervals by four-wheeled horse-drawn wagons to various coopering establishments in Sydney. Here the reeds were set aside lengthwise for drying, after which the pith from each single leaf was placed between the staves formed to make wooden casks for brewery and other liquid storage purposes. After the encircling metal hoops were driven tight the dried leaves between the staves swelled under the action of the liquid, thus making a perfect seal against cask leakage.

The centre of the stream hereabouts forms the southern boundary of the extensive Unwin grant and also the northern boundary of the 100 acre grant made to William Packer and subsequently taken over by Alexander Brodie Spark and added to his famed "TEMPE ESTATE" which it adjoined. This alluvial land came up for subdivision in 1859, the allotments averaging one acre each and upwards. Access to the properties ranged along "THE VALLEY" (as it was locally termed) was via the rural laneway known as Arncliffe Street which, by devious sharp turns and changes of direction eventually passed over the dividing ridge of Unwin's Hill near Earlwood to cross Cook's River via Wardell Road and reach New Canterbury Road to the south of Lewisham. This very ancient thoroughfare avoided the swamps in particular which lines the lower course of Cook's River, thus giving in the early days vehicle entry into the then undeveloped eastern portion of the District of St. George, once known as Botany Bay according to old maps.

Reverting to the western up-stream course of Wollie Creek the freshwater section flows through low-lying ground, once covered with beautiful Paper-bark trees (Melaleuca Leucadendra) beneath which was a dense undergrowth of ferns, making a pretty curve south-westwards for a short distance before turning sharply northwards for about one hundred yards where a second bend leads the creek in a westerly direction along the base of the immediately adjacent Unwin's Hill. Hereabouts the north-eastern boundary of the 100 acre grant, made in 1825, to Reuben Hannam is reached. The centre-line of the creek, as mapped, forms the boundary of this large estate onwards for about one mile until the confluence of the tributary stream, once known as Stoney Creek and latterly as Bardwell Creek was reached in the vicinity of the extreme western end of Hannam Street, West Arncliffe. Here a small somewhat isolated farming settlement, known as Arncliffe Village came into being, the story of which will form the basis of another essay.

THE ESTATE GRANT ALLOTTED TO REUBEN HANNAM.

The length of the southern border of the 100 acre grant to Reuben Hannam is marked to-day (1975) by the east-west alignment of old-time Church Street (now First Lane), Denison Street, and down the steep rocky hillside to link with the east-west section of Hannam Street to the bank of Wolli Creek. Large areas of first class alluvial flats bordering Wolli Creek were thus enclosed, together with high rock escarpments which later proved an acceptable habitat for a large flock of browsing goats owned by Granny Lightly who lived outside the Hannam property in the vicinity of present day Broe Avenue. The sandstone escarpment of the hill to the west of Victoria Street formed an excellent quarry, the steep wall of which can be noted at the rear of a small group of cottages erected in comparatively recent years, their frontages facing towards the cul-de-sac known as Mary Street, West Arncliffe. A grandson of Reuben Hannam, named Fred Hannam, was responsible for the development of this quarry which has long been out of use.

Reuben Hannam was born in 1779 at Wincanton, a pleasant old-world town, located in the south-eastern section of the English county of Somerset, on the hillside slopes of the picturesque Vale of Blackmoor. For some misdeamour he was transported in 1811, at the age of 32, to New South Wales where he was placed at the brick-making establishment at Brickfield Hill in the vicinity north of Goulburn Street Sydney. His exemplary character was such that Governor Macquarie made him overseer of the plant when he originated the famous "Sandstock" brick, moulded and baked from a mixture of ash, clay, lime and sand, which proved so successful in the construction of the early buildings of Sydneytown. As a reward for his efforts Governor Macquarie was instrumental in bringing out Reuben Hannam's wife and family from England, and on August 17th, 1819, the Governor granted Reuben Hannam an area of 100 acres of farmland at Campbelltown in the District of Airds. Then, in the Governorship of Sir Thomas Brisbane, he gained a further grant of 100 acres at Wolli Creek, which was rather belatedly officially gazetted to confirm his ownership in 1833 during the regime of Governor Darling. At this time also an adjoining 60 acres of land, to the south-east of the just mentioned Wolli Creek property, was granted to David Hannam (the eldest son of Reuben) and adjoining the southern boundary of this latter grant, and on the southern slopes of Arncliffe Hill, was another grant of 60 acres made to Edward Flood, who had married Reuben Hannam's daughter Charlotte.

It is questionable, owing to lack of available information to the contrary, if Reuben Hannam Developed his Wolli Creek property to any great extent, or left it in its pristine heavily forested condition. We find that according to the Census of 1828 that he was engaged as a publican with premises known as "THE RED COW INN", located in Bathurst Street Sydney, and was also living at his Campbelltown estate at this time. In November 1831 a portion of the Bathurst Street Property was sold to his son-in-law, Edward Flood, and in the next month another portion was sold to John Torwell, and a little later the remainder of the property, including the inn, also found a buyer. It is thought that about this period Reuben Hannam constructed a small single-roomed brick cottage with a bed-room loft above approached by an outside staircase at the northern gabled end. The lower room evidently came into use as a combined living room and kitchen, being provided with an outside chimney

breast at its western side. According to one authority it is possible that this little cottage, in its isolated bushland setting some five miles from Sydneytown, may have been named "TURRELLA", an aboriginal word denoting a place of reeds or a swamp. However, another theory has been advanced that the cottage was named "WINCANTON". We have no proof either way. It is also possible that the cottage had been erected in conformance with the conditions set out in the gazetted grant manuscript.

Very early in its history the Hannam Estate at Wolli Creek was bisected into two divisions of unequal size by the construction of Arncliffe Street which, in an east-west direction, skirted the base contours of the rocky hill forming the southern and larger portion of the property and had little value for farming and agistment purposes. Although enquiries have been made little information has been obtained as to the date Reuben Hannam disposed of that portion of his grant lying north of the division formed by Arncliffe Street. Local information states that after the sale had been finalised Reuben Hannam resided in a weatherboard cottage facing the southern alignment of Arncliffe Street east of the intersection of Loftus Street. This cottage, later occupied by David Hannam, remains in occupation at 1975 as No.112 Turrella Street, the street renaming taking place about 1927 when the East Hills Railway was in course of construction.

There are several pointers which suggest that the above sale may have taken place about 1838, and that the famous Colonial Statesman of that period, William Charles Wentworth, may have been the purchaser. At July 9th, 1838, he set up for sale by auction "Ninety-six allotments of land, part of the splendid estate of Vacluse", which suggests that an immediate increase in his financial resources was required. About the same time, according to other information, a relative, William Wentworth Bucknell, then about twenty-five years of age, eventually came to live on the property of Wolli Creek and was later described as a squatter. An elaborate homestead was built which gained the name "AVONDALE", and sheep-farming in particular was carried out on a large scale, the animals roving more or less at will over the countryside as far afield as Seven Mile Beach (later Lady Robinson's Beach) according to some accounts.

THE HOMESTEAD NAMED "AVONDALE". WEST BOTANY.

The picturesque two-storied homestead named "AVONDALE" (at one period also known as "WILLOWDENE") may have claim to be the largest farm-house in the Land District of St. George. It was built of stone and to a certain extent followed the architectural principles of the Georgian design as far as symmetry was concerned. It is evident that its low-lying position near the south bank of the Wolli Creek created a degree of wall dampness which was alleviated by adding an outer veneer of weatherboard attached to scantlings fastened to the brickwork, this woodwork being painted with drab, or dark-stone, oil colours. At the north-western side of the house was a ground level outshut (or skillion) covered by an extension of the steeply pitched "snug-dutch" shingled roof. The chimney, judging by its external position above the roof ridging, may have served two adjacent rooms on each floor. The top

of each flue was graced by a tall tapered chimney pot of circular shape. Tucked beneath each of the over-hanging end eaves were a pair of widely spaced small single-sashed windows admitting light to the rooms placed on the upper floor of the building. It is unfortunate that at this late date a plan of the internal arrangement of this interesting old-house is not available, particularly those appertaining to the rooms of the upper floor which are marked on each side by a row of three cosy-looking dormers.

In keeping with the practice of the times the original small brick cottage on the property was utilised as a separate kitchen and scullery, the main entrance doorway being linked to the house by a roofed flagged pathway. One may presume that the original shingled roof of the house was eventually replaced by a covering of corrugated galvanised iron when this unlovely but utilitarian material was being imported in ever increasing quantities about the eighteen-seventy period. The front verandah at ground level extended the full length of the eastern facade of the house and opened on to a narrow flower garden enclosed on three sides by a white-painted picket fence with centrally placed entrance gate.

The approach to "AVONDALE" from the main road crossing of Cook's River at Tempe was via Arncliffe Street, the eastern section of which thoroughfare ran in a westerly direction for about half a mile before curving sharply to the south-west to skirt a large market garden which, in later years, was farmed by a Chinese gentleman named How Long. Then the street made a sharp right-angled turn to the north where the white-painted gates of the above homestead were reached, together with a side picket gate for pedestrians. Beyond these gates an access lane, some 100 yards in length, continued northwards to the homestead before diverging to reach the stables and carriage shed. The horses were trained to walk along the laneway at a slow pace, thus enabling persons to alight and open and close the gates.

From the entrance gates a split post and rail fence, splashed with gold and dusty green lichens, followed in a westerly direction the northern alignment of Arncliffe Street to reach the property boundary at the water-splash at the Wolli Creek crossing. This fence line was bordered on its northern side by a closely planted row of tall pine-trees (*Pinus-insignis*) which formed a wind-break whilst the enclosure, reaching to the bank of Wolli Creek, was given over to grass lands for pasturage purposes. The creek, and its wide growth of bull-rushes, curved gradually southwards to meet the above mentioned water-splash, the banks being dotted with she-oak trees intermixed with willows, the home of a wide range of aquatic bird life.

Within the precincts of the homestead there was a surround of ornamental trees of which a huge pine was the most conspicuous, likewise several weeping willows which may have prompted the use of the lovely house-name of "WILLOWDENE" at one period. There were also a large number of white-flowered Robinia-trees, the blooms resembling in shape those of the wisteria of China and Japan. An orchard was cultivated near the house and it is evident that the members of the household were concerned with the fruit ~~thieving~~ activities of the local youth group as, being

religious-minded people, they erected a sign adjacent to the white-painted main entrance gate for all to see, which read "DO NOT STEAL. ASK AND THOU SHALT RECEIVE".

In addition to the orchard further income was raised from keeping poultry, necessitating the usual collection of hen hutments and wired yards, and growing roosters. There was also a vegetable garden which may have served for the domestic needs of the family. This latter garden was watered in the time-honoured manner adopted by the fellaheen of Egypt and consisted of a device known as a "SAKIEH", a primitive design of water-raising contrivance whereby a large diameter vertically mounted wheel, fitted with a number of small capacity vessels open at one end, fastened to the outside perimeter and partly submerged in a narrow channel dug in the bank of Wolli Creek. The wheel and its buckets was rotated through a system of creaking and roughly made gearing turned by a weary old horse plodding round a deeply worn circular path, harnessed to a horizontal beam affixed at one end to a vertical axle to which a large gear wheel was attached near its lower end. The turning of the water-wheel raised an endless string of dripping water filled vessels which, at or near their highest level, splashed their contents into a flume, and from thence, via earth dug channels, to the various garden plots marked for irrigation, each being surrounded by low earth ridges to prevent water-wastage.

William Wentworth Bucknell died at the age of 77 years on October 8th, 1891 and, according to local information, was interred on his property, the grave and headstone being enclosed by a white picket fence placed at a distance of about 150 yards to the east of the tree-girt homestead. There has been a suggestion that the burial enclosure contained three graves, those of two men and a woman, but precise details are lacking. A small white marble memorial plaque was first placed on the eastern wall of the northern transept of Old St. David's Church of England in Hirst Street, Arncliffe, the simple inscription reading:

William Wentworth Bucknell
Died 8th October, 1891. 77 years.

It is believed that there is no registration of the burial in the local parish register. The plaque may have been installed in 1903 as it also includes mention of:

Leslie Frank Bucknell
Died 25th January, 1903. 42 years.

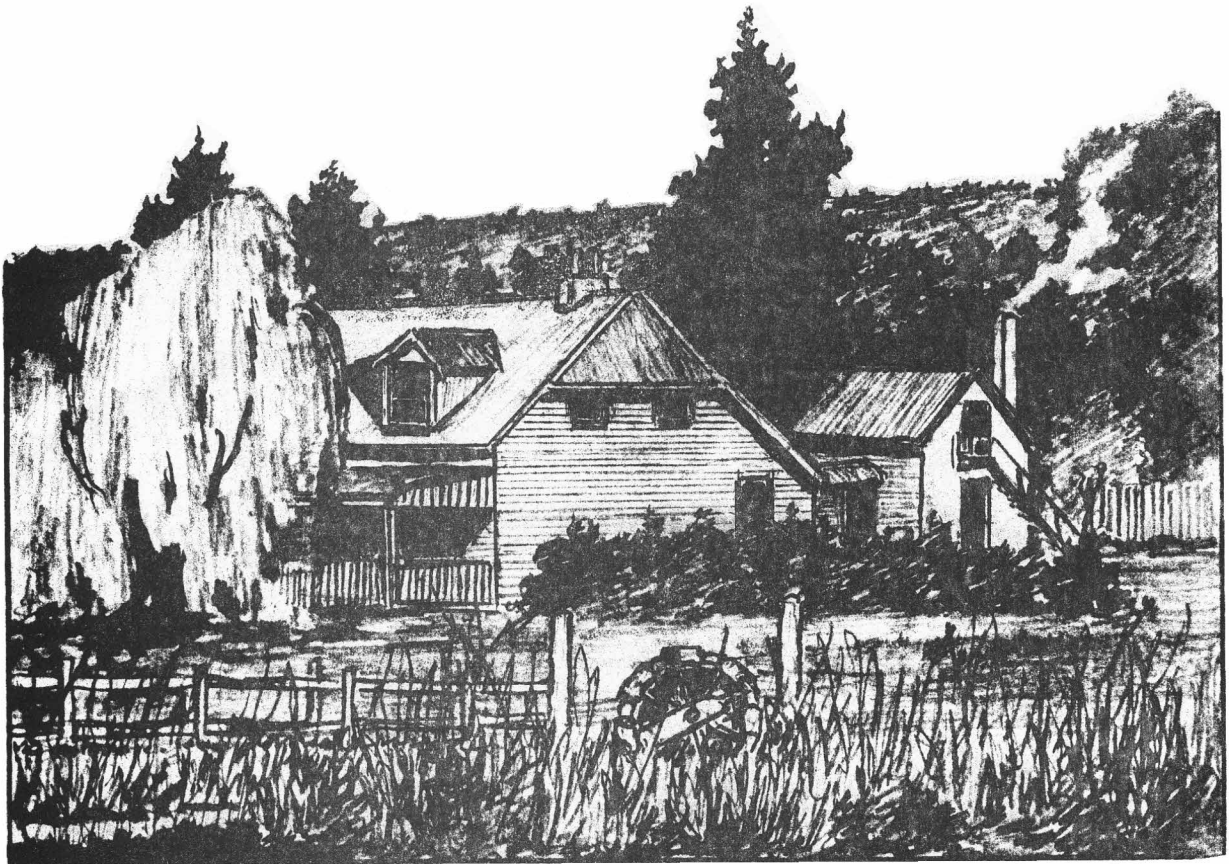
After the sale of Old St. David's church property to the Rockdale Municipal Council the above plaque was relocated within the confines of "New" St. David's Church on Forest Road, Arncliffe.

Scant information has been garnered in reference to the members of the Bucknell family, but a perusal of the John Sands Director for 1900 reveals that Darcy Bucknell was a solicitor and Horace Bucknell was a surveyor, both being in residence at "AVONDALE". There was a Dr. Bucknell in practice at Rockdale and it has been learned that Lionel Bucknell and Reginald Bucknell may have been grandsons of William

Wentworth Bucknell. Lionel went to live at a property in the Inverell District, whilst Reginald continued to live at "AVONDALE" and married in due course and was blessed with one daughter named Joyce. He was a Stock and Station Agent and also filled the position of Stock Inspector for the district and was a veterinary surgeon. He bred racehorses and was well known at the former Brighton-le-Sands Racecourse. He was a superb horse rider and an expert gun-man.

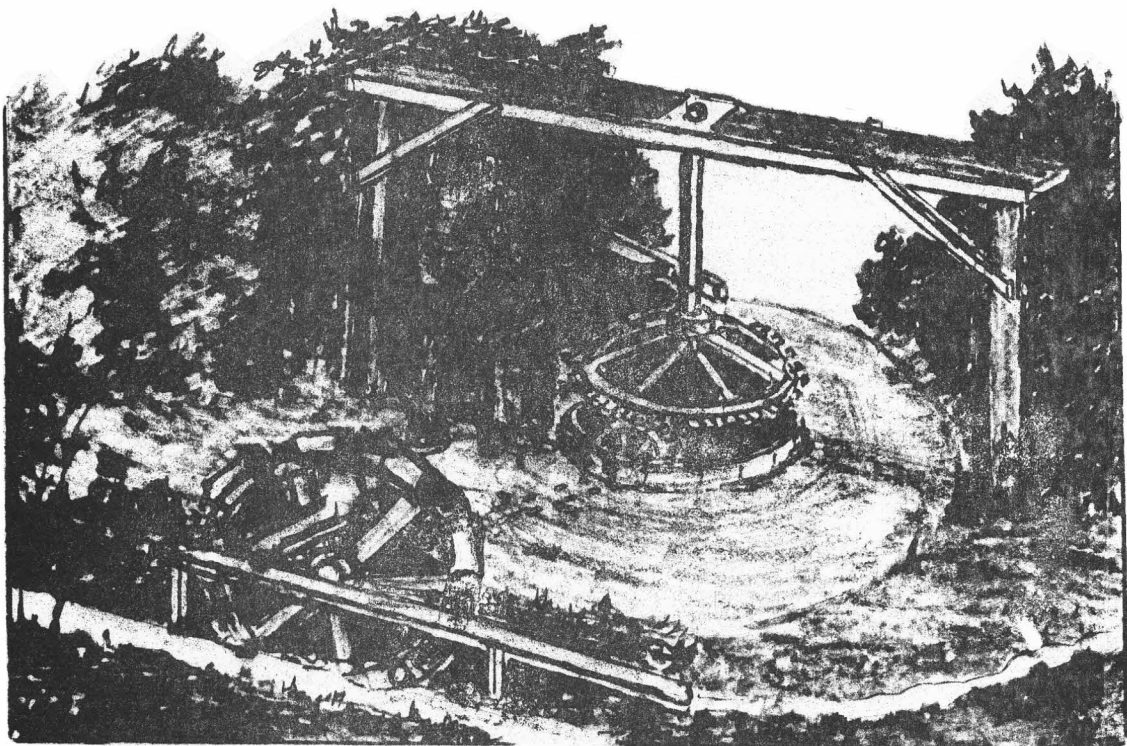
At an undetermined period the extreme western portion of the "AVONDALE" property was cultivated as a market garden by an industrious group of Chinese gardeners, who resided in a four-roomed double-fronted weatherboard cottage of the once so popular "Hudson Ready-cut" type. Otherwise the extensive pasture enclosure, with its pine-tree bordered southern fringe, remained a scene of countryside rural peace and quietness, the only disturbance being created by the occasional trilling song of reed-warblers, often accompanied by the soft muted quacking of "paddlings" of Black-duck, or the sharp strident call of the Purple-breasted Gallinule as they haunted the dense reed-beds of Wolli Creek in their ever constant search for edible titbits.

This atmosphere of tranquility remained until about the mid-nineteen-twenties when the construction of the East Hills Railway traversed the site, necessitating the demolition of the "AVONDALE" homestead, together with the destruction of the age-old pine-trees carried out in accordance with the "scorched earth" traditional policy of civil engineers. The re-alignment of Arncliffe Street was necessary and in its new location gained the name of Turrella Street, that portion of the old road left on the northern side of the railway, together with an eastern dead-end extension became listed as Henderson Street. This street re-arrangement was cross-connected by an overhead bridge, spanning the railway, erected at the eastern end of the Turrella Railway Station. The former "AVONDALE" property is now almost fully occupied as an industrial area, its subdivision resulting in a long range of factory premises facing Henderson Street. Fortunately, as yet, the Wolli Creek boundary has remained more or less intact and still resounds to the music of its aquatic bird life.



"Avondale", Woll Creek.

GIFFORD EARDLEY.



A SAKIEH.