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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe. 2205.  
April 1975.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, April 18th, 1975, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Mr. Freeman (who gave an illustrated talk on the "Sydney Ferries" some little time back), has kindly offered to give an Illustrated Address titled "The History and Development of Sydney Cove".

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

Ladies please bring a plate.

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.

'A Cynic is a man who knows the price of everything,  
and the value of nothing.'  
..... Wilde.

### Social News.

A visit to "Little Hartley Farm" which is on or near the Great Western Highway at the foot of Mt. Victoria. Here you will see things both ancient and modern, you may join in a Hay ride, or even milk a cow, together with many more attractions.

Date: Sunday, April 20th, 1975.

Meeting Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Time: 8.00 a.m. (an early start, it is a fair distance).

Cost: \$2.00 (approximately) (entry to farm extra).

Weather permitting, this should be a most enjoyable outing. If you are interested, and we hope you will be, ring Mrs. Wright, phone 599.4884 for details and bookings. Everybody is welcome, please come along and help to make this outing a happy one.

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### Donations to "Lydham Hall".

Miss Thomas, Bexley.	Glass Cake Dish, over 80 years old. Blue Glass Pickle Jar in Silver Stand, over 80 years. Blue Cake Dish.
Mrs. McMillan, Lydham Avenue, Rockdale.	Shawl Pin & Chain, over 100 years old. Old Silver Teaspoon, Grape design on handle. 4 Australian Teaspoons, 1889. Child's Drinking Cup, Black Lace Scarf, over 100 years old, Penny Tram Ticket, Portable Writing Desk & numerous other items.
Mrs. D. Hay, Arncliffe.	Willow Pattern Dish, Glass Honey Jar, Silver Thimble, (very old).
Miss Everison, Carlton.	Teapot, milk jug, hotwater jug, drinking cup, <u>all Pewter</u> also Pewter sugar bowl. Pink Water Jug, Mustard Pot & Spoon, Pepper Jar, Ash Tray, 4 Ornaments (Ballet, Lady, Little Girl), Gold & White Crockery Sugar Basin & Jug, China Bird & Swan, Glass Decanter & Decanter in Brass Holder, Glass Water Jug, 5 White Plates with Blue & Gold Band, <u>Mulga Wood</u> , Ink Stand, Ink Stand with Pen, & Egg Cup, & numerous other items.

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It is with regret that we record yet another sad loss. Miss Eula Gettens, one of our very early Members and staunch supporters, passed away suddenly. To her Relatives we offer our deepest sympathy. She will be sadly missed, at our meetings, particularly.

## FOOTPATHS IN THE OLD MUNICIPALITY OF BEXLEY, N.S.W.

A. F. and F. G. Day.

Desirable features of civilised town life include good footpaths, but when Bexley became an independent borough in 1900, its footpaths were far from good. There were then about 81 named streets with a total length of about 30 miles (48 km) in existence in the borough. It was hardly to be expected that the small population of the area, with only about 580 houses, could have provided much development of this kind.

Roads were so bad in those days that the footpaths were used at times by all kinds of traffic, including bread, milk, butchers' and brick carts, sulkies, bicycles and postmen from Rockdale or Hurstville (on bikes or horses). After wet weather the footpaths were as rutted as the roads and Bexley Council was forced to look at the matter seriously, because of pedestrians' complaints. So in 1908, when bricks were first used for paving, advertisements were put in the local papers warning that such action was an offence against the by-laws.

As early as 1902, Council had approached the police for help in this regard. In those days a constable was on beat duty in Forest Road and he was requested to keep an eye on a newly constructed footpath. Several years later, an alderman and the Council Clerk were "prepared to stop horsemen riding on footpaths on Friday afternoons". At a few locations in later years, posts were put across the paths to prevent vehicles or horse riders mounting them. Queens Avenue ramp, declared a footpath in November 1923, was an example of this. The corner of Bay View and Godwin Street was another.

Bexley Municipality is hilly in places, so the advent of good footpaths was an invitation to young boys to make and use "billy carts. Scooters came slightly later. This activity became such a nuisance that Council had to take action. In October 1918, 1,000 dodgers were printed warning parents of the dangers involved in the practice and the possibility of actions for damages in the event of injury to persons.

### Pavement Construction.

Ashes were much used as paving material in the early days, but were apt to disappear gradually into the soil in wet weather. Such paths were regarded more as temporary expedients. Ashes cost 1/3d. to 1/6d. per cu.yd. and came either from the water pumping station then in existence near Carlton Railway Station, or from a brickworks near the junction of Durham Street with Forest Road. Abercorn Street had an ashes and tar footpath in 1922. In the depression year, 1933, ashes had to be used alone until funds were available for brick paths. Tar and sawdust had been suggested much earlier (1906) for a footpath in Bay View Street. It is not known whether these materials made a satisfactory path, especially in hot weather.

In an urgent case a resident would be supplied with a heap of ashes and he would do the spreading. As late as 1940, residents of Tempe Road (changed 1942 to Slade Road) requested a footpath, which had to be of ashes, it being wartime.

Two hundred pounds was spent in the first year of brick paving in Bexley. Unfortunately, the bricks used in those days were ordinary "common" house-bricks and not suitable for many years of wear. So by the 1930's many of these paths were being top-dressed with asphalt. Later brick paths were made of "clinker" hard-burnt bricks and, apart from any sinkage at soft spots or at vehicle entrances, served for many years.

In 1924, the bricks cost 73/- per thousand at the brickworks previously mentioned. The finished footpath cost 6/6d. per square yard.

Special "frogless" bricks were suggested for paths, but the Engineer reported better bedding and readier replacement with ordinary bricks.

Where tar was used for footpaths, it would be brushed over the dry earth, using a bass broom, then sprinkled with sand and allowed time to dry. On one occasion the Council's tar boiler caught fire and a nearby resident claimed £15 compensation for damage to the roof of her house.

In September 1919, Council passed an allowance of 1/6d. per week for men doing tar paving, "to cover the cost of destruction of boots and clothes at such work."

The standard construction for a tar footpath later became (1923): 2 $\frac{1}{4}$ in. Base course of  $\frac{3}{4}$ in. tarred metal, topped with  $\frac{3}{4}$ in. of tarred metal screenings. The path was made five feet wide.

During the early 1930's, concrete paths came into favour. At first these were bought as 2 feet x 2 feet and 2 feet x 1 foot slabs, 2in. thick and laid on sand.

Apparently, these were so successful, that Council decided to make its own slabs. A 36 ft. x 28 ft. building at the Council depot in Rye Avenue, became the slab factory. A special hydraulic press was purchased and production began. Many thousands of the slabs were made in the next six years. By May 1933, output was about 70 slabs per day and by June it reached 104. Council was so pleased with this enterprise that, in 1935, it was suggested that slabs be sold to neighbouring councils and to the public. The price was to be 2/6d. each for the 2 x 2 slabs, plus cartage, with 5% off for 50 or more. However, the idea was not proceeded with.

Production reached a peak in 1935 and 1936, 13,200 slabs being made in the two years.

Paving with slabs was said to cost 6/8d. per sq. yard, which was slightly cheaper than for brick, or slabs previously bought on contract.

In 1936, burglars broke padlocks on the factory and stole wrenches, ambulance bandages and iodine and threw oil around the place. On another occasion, four boys, who had been implicated, were made to attend a Council meeting and were admonished by the Mayor. On their promising to mend their ways, the pending prosecutions were withdrawn and they paid 25/- for the damage they caused.

As a result of these episodes, a six-foot paling fence with barbed wire on top, costing over £60, had to be erected. Although the cost of a slab footpath was claimed to be seven pence per square yard less than in-situ concrete, already, by 1936, Council began to have doubts about the future use of slabs. In that year, one of the moulders at the factory had to cease work because of lung trouble. Difficulty was next experienced with newly made slabs sticking to the palettes. These troubles were thought to be caused by the blue-metal dust. Then the hydraulic press broke down. Bexley Progress Association had maintained for several years that "in-situ" concrete would be more economic in the long run. The slab factory was costing £30 per week to run, including £9.6.8 per week for two men's wages. Finally, in 1939, the Engineer recommended that concrete paths be laid "in-situ", as ratepayers preferred it. Slabs continued to be laid against vacant land, where disturbance of the path might subsequently occur.

A comparison of costs of "slab" against "in-situ" paths in 1943 for a Kingsland Road path between Canonbury Grove and Barnsbury Grove was: Slab path 4 feet wide £300, 5 feet £342, In-situ 5 feet £420.

The plant remaining in the slab factory was valued in 1945 at £57. Some years earlier, it had been suggested that research be carried out in conjunction with Hurstville Council into the making of bituminous concrete slabs, but nothing came of the idea.

It was thought in 1947, that the factory might be used for the manufacture of cement tiles, but this would not have been possible without considerable financial outlay. The power grader and other plant occupied the building and these would then need to be separately housed. Under the circumstances, it seemed wiser to await results of the pending municipalities amalgamation legislation. At the time of amalgamation with Rockdale, the slab factory was valued on the books at £276.9.9.

In the early years of footpath construction, a street could get a path down one side only - the side with most houses. The other side might wait six or eight years for its path.

In 1946, when the "in-situ" laid footpath was thoroughly established, the use of ready-mix concrete was investigated, but decided against for a number of reasons: (1) slightly higher cost, (2) difficulty in pouring into frames and moulds, (3) waiting periods between deliveries, (4) anxiety about stopping deliveries when wet weather might suddenly threaten, (5) could not be laid with joints, because of rush to pour, (6) better job obtained by mixing as required.

#### Footpaths with Unusual Features.

These occur chiefly because of the hilly nature of parts of Bexley. Some of the path at the lower end of Queen Victoria Street, for instance, has not been cut down to near road level, resulting in the need for steps, sometimes out in the solid rock.

At the end of Queen Victoria Street we come to the one-in-six up-grade, commonly known through the years as "The Ramp", which leads to Station Street. Up to the mid-thirties its official name was Queens Avenue, but is



not now shown in some street directories. It was first mentioned in 1912, when residents petitioned Council to secure land for the extension of Queen Victoria Street to Station Street, opposite Kogarah Railway Station. The Government approved and a transfer of land took place. In 1922, there was a proposal to borrow £4000 to build a bridge over the creek, so that the road could go through. The road was never built, instead the creek became a brick storm water drain bridged with a reinforced concrete slab and a pedestrian ramp was made. This was officially declared a footpath in 1923. The surface was originally done in brick, but this was later (1942) "sheeted" with tarred metal. The top entrance was attractively finished with a pergola.

Police were notified in 1926 that cyclists were using the ramp and special barriers had to be used to stop this practice.

Washington Street is one of two streets which do not have vehicle access right through from Queen Victoria Street to Dunmore Street. After a short distance, it is for pedestrians only, until the higher level is reached. A winding uphill path terminates in about a dozen steps. This area could be attractively landscaped with palms etc. Towards the right is an interesting geological feature, "cross bedding", in the sandstone strata.

The steep path leading from Queen Victoria Street to Connemarra Street on the north side, having a grade of one-in-four, was always a difficult one for some people. In November 1938, Council voted £33 for the provision of a handrail on the eastern side.

The unpaved pedestrian track through the upper part of the Bardwell Valley is worth mention here. It is approached from near the north end of Preddeys Road, past the site for the Olympic swimming pool and the old incinerator and continues in a north-easterly direction to Bexley Road at the Jubilee Bridge. For a large part of the approximately half-mile walk, progress is through a deep bush-surrounded gully.

#### Council Regulations Etc. in Relation to Footpaths.

Where grass grew on unpaved footpaths, Council undertook to mow it occasionally.

If a concrete path was not close to the fence, and levels permitted, then a short strip of concrete between path and gate would be constructed at the usual charge for paving.

Council decided in December 1916, that once a ratepayer had paid his share of the footpath cost, there would be no further charge for maintenance, or renewal. This share was to be half for ordinary frontages, plus one-third for the side street of corner blocks.

As early as 1910, builders were required to lodge a deposit of £1 before materials could be taken across brick or tarred footpaths (concrete had not then been used). The footpath opening fee, for laying pipes, was set at 10/-. In 1917, the opening fee became £1, unless the path was unpaved, when it remained at 10/-.

In 1910, it was made illegal to allow roof water to discharge across footpaths.

The N.S.W. Board of Health in 1906, circularised councils, suggesting that a by-law be introduced making spitting on footpaths an offence. On January 22 of that year, Bexley Council passed the by-law, on the grounds that it would minimise the spread of T.B.

Where trees overhung footpaths, owners were, as early as 1904, issued with a notice to cut them back.

Barbed wire on a front fence was considered a public danger. A case occurred in January 1921 where the wire was removed by Council employees and the owner was informed of the risk involved.

#### Damage to Footpaths.

In February 1939, a warning was put in the local press relating to the practice of contractors and others using footpaths for mixing concrete or for colouring cement, then leaving the path in a soiled condition.

A young lady living in Croydon Road persisted in climbing under rope barriers in the evening and leaving small heel marks in concrete laid the same afternoon.

Several slippery spots on footpaths received attention in 1940 by "crow-picking". Two cases of which records exist are - the corner of Forest Road and Highworth Avenue outside the then existing butcher's shop, and outside the Commonwealth Bank at the corner of Harrow Road, Bexley.

#### Pedestrian Bridges.

Where a road bridge did not exist and pedestrians had to make long detours, a foot bridge was clearly desirable.

The earliest mention of a pedestrian bridge was in 1909, when nearby residents petitioned Council for one over the creek where Connemarra Street (south) reaches Queen Victoria Street.

There is quite a steep dip in Connemarra Street between Dunmore Street and Harrow Road. This was quite a pretty spot in the early twenties, although a neighbouring residence had the name "Elavole" on its gate. A footbridge was set at an angle to the line of road, because of the slightly oblique direction of the creek. It was built in 1917, at a cost "not to exceed £3."

Ellerslie Road, between Eddystone Road and New Illawarra Road, is bisected by Bardwell (originally Stoney) Creek, the approaches to which are very steep on both sides. A request was made for a foot bridge over the creek in 1941 but, perhaps because of the war, no funds were available. A bridge had been constructed at this location by local people in the early 30's and was subsequently strengthened by the Council. However, in October 1932, the bridge disappeared completely, including the anchoring stay wires. It had not been washed away, as no sign of it was found lower down the creek. Evidently, in those depression days, it became someone's firewood.

In 1945, a footbridge existed in Warialda Street and theft of a corner post and two rails was reported. Loss of parts of bridges was a common occurrence in those days.

Wolli Creek, the boundary between Bexley and Canterbury Municipalities was bridged for pedestrians at two points in the Kingsgrove area: Bonalbo Street (1942) and Kooreela Street (1948). The cost of the former was shared by the two councils, but there is no mention of the allocation of cost of the latter before the amalgamation day.

In 1947, it was realised that a pedestrian bridge over Forest Road at Bexley School was necessary for the children. The estimated cost was £2000, half to be paid by the Department of Road Transport of those days and the remainder to be shared equally by Rockdale and Bexley Councils. The clearance height of the bridge was made quite adequate but it was seriously damaged and put out of action a few times by vehicles colliding with it. Because of this, solid timbers were concreted in the ground at each of the four vulnerable corners.

(Continued in May issue.)