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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.
May 1975.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday evening, May 16th, 1975, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

NOTICE OF MOTION. That the Annual Subscription to the above Society be
increased (Recommended increase - \$2.00 per Member - \$3.00 - Family
rate, two or more Members)

Syllabus Item: Mr. Peter Sage has kindly offered to take us to the Flinders
Ranges and York Peninsula, per medium of his slides and his inimitable
Commentary.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Day, Captain, and Mrs. O'Meara, Mrs. Gash, Mrs.
Johnson, Mrs. Greenlees, Mrs. M. Smith.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,

President.

Phone 587.4555.

Mrs. E. Wright,

Treasurer & Soc. Sec.

Phone 599.4884.

Mrs. E. Eardley,

Secretary.

Phone 59.8078.

Mr. A. Ellis,

Research Officer.

Phone 587.1159.

"Nothing needs so reforming as other people's habits." Mark Twain.

A Special note to our Members:

Due to increased costs it has become necessary to increase the Annual Subscription, recommended increase - \$2.00 per Member, \$3.00 Family Rate (2 or more Members).

This is the first and only increase since the Society was formed in June 1961.

A limited supply of the following books, written and illustrated by the late Gifford Eardley (re-printed by popular request) are now available, cost \$1.00 each, postage 10¢ extra:

Book 1. "The Early History of The Wolli Creek Valley"

Book 2. "The Kogarah To Sans Souci Tramway"

Book 3. "Thomas Saywell's Tramway. 1887 - 1914. Rockdale to Lady Robinsons Beach."

Book 4. "The Arncliffe To Bexley Steam Tramway"

Also available are: (By the same Author)

Book 5. "Heritage In Stone" (Limited Stocks)

Book 6. "All Stations To Como" (Limited Stocks)

Book 7. "The Early History. Tempe & The Black Creek Valley"

Contact Secretary 'Phone 59.8078

or Miss Otten 'Phone 59.4259

'Lydham Hall' News.

A special "Thankyou" to Miss Thomas of Forest Road, Bexley, for the beautiful flowers which she sends to "Lydham Hall" every week. This gesture is greatly appreciated.

Miss Otten, Curator of "Lydham Hall", is in need of Ladies and/or Gentlemen to assist with the weekend roster. Visitors come from far and wide to see this lovely old Home, and your presence would greatly facilitate inspections. Ring Miss Otten, Phone 59.4259, your call will be appreciated.

Donations to "Lydham Hall"

School of Arts, Bexley.	2 Kerosene Table Lamps.
Mr. Tom Dickin, Bexley North.	5 Piece Rosewood Dining Suite. (age not known) Old Inkstand (wood) with Glass Inkwell 1 Blue & White Plate, English China
Mrs. J. Preddey, Bexley.	Photograph of the late Mr. & Mrs. George Preddey, Picture of "Besborough" Homestead, Bexley.
Miss Mascord	20 Pieces of English "Willow Pattern" China.
Miss Thomas, Bexley.	Embroidered "Grass" Lawn Tablecloth (over 50 Yrs.) 2 Books on "Vaucluse House" 1922-23. Views of Sydney, 1900. Pair Spectacles, 50 years old. Feeding Cup, (No details)
Miss E. Banks, Rockdale.	Tin Hat Box - 70 - 100 years old Pure Silk Collar - 40 years old Cane Sewing Basket - 50 years old Christmas & Birthday Cards - 1911 - 1913 2 Pictures of Period Frocks - 1900 Official Souvenir Programme - Opening of Sydney Harbour Bridge - 1932. Official Programme - Coronation of King George VI - 1934 Souvenir of visit of Duke of York Souvenir of visit of Prince of Wales - 1924?

A.F. and F.G.Day.

Kerbs and Gutters.

The earliest kerbs and gutters in Bexley were of sandstone and some of these are still in existence. It was found later that the cost could be about halved by the use of concrete and, in 1908, fifty feet of concrete gutters were made. By 1914, it was found that it was possible to lay brick kerbs of two courses, including a top "bullnose" with a 22 inch, brick gutter at comparable cost. The "bullnose" bricks were 105/- per thousand at the kiln. 25,000 bricks were ordered at a time for kerbing and guttering.

In spite of its hygienic advantages, some Wallace Street residents protested against the construction of kerb and gutter in 1918, - "Because it is wartime." Of course, they had to pay half the cost!

In 1921, a tender price of 11/10d. per yard for brick kerb and gutter was received, with pipe-holes at 3d. each. Tenderers were asked to employ Bexley residents on the work. Several contracts proved so satisfactory that, in 1923, Council stated that future work would be done that way. At that time owners were charged 6/8d. per yard for frontage kerbs and gutters and 4/5d. per yard for side streets of corner blocks.

Before an area was sewered, absence of properly graded street gutters allowed house drainage (from sinks, baths, tubs etc.) to lie in stagnant pools along the roadside. For this reason, in 1918, an official warning was given to people not to allow children to play in such gutters. The fact that milking cows were sometimes found drinking gutter water emphasised the importance of the Impounding Officer.

When proper gutters were constructed, but before sewerage came, the Water Board supplied free water for gutter flushing and a man with a broom did the rest. In 1942 (wartime), only one man, with horse and dray was available for this work. Twenty years before, two men acted in this capacity at pounds 4.10.0 per week each.

Gutter cleaning of the Bexley, Carlton and West Kogarah shopping centres on Sunday mornings was instituted in 1925.

A curious situation existed at Kingsgrove shopping centre, where the boundary between Hurstville and Bexley Municipalities runs down the centre of the road. An employee from each council swept its gutter on both Mondays and Thursdays. In 1942, it was arranged, at Bexley's suggestion, that each Council sweep both sides on its day - Hurstville on Monday and Bexley on Thursday.

Four instances occurred in 1942 of owners in Regent Street refusing to pay their rates unless their kerbs and gutters were made. The success or otherwise of this refusal was not disclosed.

The Council Engineer reported in 1942, that 300 gallons of white paint had been used to paint kerbs for the assistance of visibility during the wartime brown-outs.

Footpath Lawns and Garden Beds.

Away from shopping centres, it was rare for the pavement to occupy the full width from fence to kerb. Usually, more than half the width would be occupied by lawn which inevitably became the householder's maintenance responsibility. (It also mitigated the dog nuisance.) Up to the time of the depression, Council would supply an occasional lawn top-dressing.

The paspalum menace was first mentioned in Feb. 1931. By 1939, it was so bad that the Department of Agriculture Weeds Officer was invited to Bexley to advise Council on eradication. Council staff had carried out poisoning and burning operations and the Weeds Officer confirmed that this was the best method. He recommended use of a different poison and this was then experimented with. In 1941, the Council reported that it was spending pounds 33 per month on paspalum eradication.

Forty Kingsgrove residents received special mention for clearing paspalum from Kookaburra Avenue, between Staples Street and Kingsgrove Road.

In 1948, Bexley Progress Association wanted property owners to be compelled to eradicate paspalum from the footpath. This was not possible because the eradication of weeds was Council's responsibility. A suggestion that Council give a small rate rebate for keeping footpaths in order was discarded as impracticable.

The Head Gardener reported in 1948 that kikuyu grass, which does not run to seed, eventually choked paspalum, but needed mowing very frequently.

Many people extended their gardening efforts to the front footpath and on one occasion (1928) Council showed its appreciation by thanking a Mimosa Street resident for the "Civic spirit displayed in trimming up footpaths surrounding his property." It sounds as though he had a corner block!

Rockeries were permitted alongside pavements providing the work was done at the ratepayers expense and that the stones were kept whitened to assist visibility at night.

In 1927, Council's Health Inspector suggested a "Beautiful Gardens and Footpaths" competition, but the idea was not agreed to at the time. However, in 1931, the suggestion was renewed with success. Prizes valued at pounds 10, 5 and 2 were decided on. The first competition closed on Feb. 27, 1932 and judging took place on March 5. The competition was held again in 1933 with prizes of less value. The total cost was stated to be pounds 15; comprising prizes pounds 9, certificates pounds 1, advertising pounds 5. The prize winner in 1934, a resident of Forest Road, had "a beautiful display of flowers and well-kept lawns - a splendid display of civic pride."

The Judge of the competition was awarded 10/- for out-of-pocket expenses.

In 1936, there was a poor response to the competition and in the following year it was described as very disappointing. So, after six years, this exercise in "civic pride" came to an end. It was an unfortunate coincidence that in the year the competition started (1932) the Council's Economy Committee recommended discontinuance of the supply of shrubs, palms and other plants to residents for their footpaths. However, it must be remembered that the great financial depression was then at its worst. Council continued to assist in the making of footpath lawns, by removing surplus soil if required, but not in any other way.

The "Beautiful Gardens and Footpaths" competitions did have some lasting benefit for those who entered them. They had eradicated their paspalum.

Street Trees.

The first record of street tree planting was in 1900, when applications for four trees and treeguards came from Dunmore Street. The residents had to pay 3/9d., half the cost per guard. Later, in 1908, the charge was 3/-, but in 1918 it was 10/-. The guards were rather vulnerable to theft. Some "disappeared" from Regent Street in 1925.

In 1903, the planting of trees in front of Kogarah (originally spelt "Koggerah") and Carlton Railway Stations was agreed to. These stations, like that at Rockdale, consisted of two side platforms in those days and travellers stepped straight from the platform to the street unless they had to cross the line. Waratah Street was next in requesting trees, but there was a counter petition against tree planting. Objecting residents were assured that the trees were obtained free and the cost to the Council of planting would be about pounds 10. Several weeks later however, a resident wrote, asking the Council not to plant a tree in front of his house, because of his state of ill-health. Evidently he feared loss of sunshine, so his request was agreed to. The appearance of Waratah

Street in later years, when viewed from Forest Road, was much better for the trees. Albyn Street residents were allowed to plant their own trees in 1907.

Trees in the streets were nothing but a pleasure until overhead wires came. First, telephone wires and then later, and more dangerously, the electricity supply mains of the St. George County Council (early 20's). Some wires went underground in the thirties, but others remained. However, the St. George County Council agreed to pay the cost of lopping trees, where interference with its wires was possible.

In 1928, the Botanic Gardens gave 700 trees for street planting and 200 more the following year.

Council was well advised by its Foreman Gardener in the matter of suitable trees for planting in various locations. Examples were the Lilly Pillies in Albyn Street, Tallow Woods in Warialda Street and Lemon-scented Gums in Caledonian Street. Brush Box was found to be ideal for streets which had poor or shallow soil, or were unduly exposed to wind. Queen Victoria Street and adjoining streets had Brush Box for many years and, later on, they did well in Bexley Road.

In 1935, there was a proposal to plant trees in Stoney Creek Road. The idea was dropped, as the footpaths were not wide enough and the type of traffic ruled against it.

Trees planted in exposed places, such as the old Kingsgrove area on Stoney Creek Road, needed close-slatted guards when young, to protect them from strong winds.

In the late 1920's, some planting of Phoenix palms took place, many being supplied by the residents themselves. Council voted pounds 45 for the planting of palms in Highworth Avenue. They were planted also, in the Council Chamber area of Queen Victoria Street.

Almost all the palms were removed in later years, because of trouble with seeds blocking drains, unsuitability for lopping under wires and fears by pedestrians of undesirables hiding behind the large boles at night. However, seven of the palms near the old Council Chambers remain to this day.

During the depression of the early 1930's, residents in financial distress were allowed to remove dead trees for firewood. Neglect of watering of trees during long, dry conditions always endangered those in poor locations.

Planting a street tree in 1940 cost a total of 15/- (labour 1/6d., advanced tree 7/6d., staking 1/-, cartage of soil 5/-).

Lopping trees took two men three months. They were supplied with overalls and rubber boots for the work.

Council made a rule that horses were not to be tethered to street trees.

Footpath "Furniture" etc.

Horse troughs occupied space on the footpaths from early days. The earliest mention of them in our records was in 1908, when a horse and cattle trough was suggested for Railway Parade, Carlton. The actual installation took place the next year at the corner of Webber's Road (now Willison Road) at a cost of pounds 15.15.0. In 1914, two more were suggested, one at the corner of Queen Victoria Street and Robertson Street and the other in Forest Road opposite Stoney Creek Road. In 1920, the latter was moved across Forest Road to Kingsland Road near the old Gas Company Office. All these troughs were cast iron type and seven years after installation were in such bad condition that they were replaced by new concrete troughs. In 1922, Hurstville Council was asked for half the cost of a trough to be erected at the corner of Stoney Creek Road and Croydon Road. Perhaps Hurstville did not agree to the proposal, because an old cast iron type was reconditioned and installed there. In the same year a new trough with a dogs' drink was placed in Forest Road near Albyn Street corner. In 1924, the trough at the lower end of Queen Victoria Street was not working properly and had to be repaired. Four years later it was replaced by a concrete type. Because of inconvenience to pedestrians and risk of splashing, the horse and dog trough was moved from near Albyn Street to the other side of Forest Road. This replaced the one originally in Kingsland Road.

The Local Government Association enquired from Council in 1939 regarding horse troughs, on behalf of the Estate of the late G. Bills. The Health Inspector said it was estimated that 70 horses passed the corner of Stoney Creek Road and Croydon Road in a day and 40 a day at the corner of the then Tempe (now Slade) Road and New Illawarra Road. These sites were recommended for new troughs. The one in Stoney Creek Road became a replacement for the old iron one, which had actually been found to be too small for horses with large heads.

To all these troughs, of which there were at least six, the Water Board supplied water free of cost to the Council.

In 1922, Council stated that it had no power to give permission for the erection of a kerb-side petrol "bowser" (as the first petrol pumps were known). However, in 1924, it did agree to the erection of one in Forest Road. But, early in 1925, it was made aware of new Government regulations regarding obstructions on footpaths, particularly petrol pumps.

Motorists early in the century had to rely on four-gallon tins of "motor spirit" shipped from U.S.A. or Sumatra, two in a wooden case. Later, the convenience of the hand-operated petrol pump became available. These were placed near the kerb and there might be several of different brands outside a garage. The prohibition of new kerb-side pumps soon caused the appearance of drive-in service stations, at first many brands at each, and in the late 30's of the one brand station. All pumps were then motor-operated.

In 1945, Council agreed with the Department of Main Roads that all kerb-side pumps be removed from main roads by the end of 1947.

The Department of Local Government had, in 1928, rather curiously, informed councils of the danger from shadows of petrol pumps being thrown across streets.

Kerbside verandah posts of shops came to the notice of the authorities in 1929 and an instruction was given that they were to be eliminated within two years.

A hitching post was placed at the kerb in Albyn Street in 1922 behind the newly erected shops at the Dunmore Street end. The arrangement was that the ratepayer supplied the post and fittings and Council employees erected it.

A number of drinking fountains were erected in various parts of the Municipality in the early 1920's. One at the foot of Dunmore Street against Seaforth Park cost pounds 18 in 1922. Unfortunately, damage by vandals was caused to some of these. This prompted Council in 1924, to ask headmasters of schools in the Municipality to impress on children the necessity for protecting Council property. Early in the following year, three signs were prepared, at a cost of 10/- each, for erection at drinking fountains, warning people against interference with a fountain.

Nearly eighteen months after the request to headmasters, letters were received from schoolboys representing all classes from third to sixth, promising to protect drinking fountains and other Council property.

The Water Board supplied free water to drinking fountains.

In February 1941, Council received a gift of a combined drinking fountain and trough for dogs from the Estate of the late Jessie Broomfield. This item was placed in store for future use.

In 1904, a water standpipe stood on the Stoney Creek Road footpath at Kingsgrove in the vicinity of the old Wine Bar. It was found necessary to print a warning notice against unauthorised interference with it. A local resident offered in 1909, to take charge of the issuing of water if the pipe were moved to opposite his residence. The charge for water was three pence for up to 200 gallons. In 1910, the Water Board decided that a bond would be necessary, otherwise the water would be cut off. Eight years later, the Council decided to have the standpipe moved to New Illawarra Road, but was informed the charge by the Water Board would be pounds 5. There appears to be no record of the later history of the standpipe.

A request for permission to erect a canvas awning outside a shop in Queen Victoria Street was referred to the Building Inspector. An eight foot clearance over the footpath was required.

Advertisement hoardings were tolerated by the Council in early years, but more and more reluctantly as time went by. In 1909, a fee of one penny per sq. yard per annum was fixed, with a minimum charge of 10/-. A bill poster's licence cost 1/- per annum.

In 1920, it was decided that all hoardings were to be demolished by the end of that year. Subsequent requests, in 1922, for permission to erect them were refused. In 1923, the Victory Picture Theatre was asked to remove a hoarding in Station Street. This hoarding was near the theatre and must have previously been overlooked.

In 1927, the Council's attitude appears to have changed, because it accepted an offer to pay pounds 175 for a five-year lease of a hoarding to be erected in Warialda Street.

A local Government Ordinance relating to hoardings and advertising signs came into operation in 1933.

By 1935, Council attitude to hoardings had hardened again; a notice was served on the Victory Theatre to demolish all hoardings and remove all advertising signs. This was unfortunate, because residents in streets remote from the theatre, sometimes relied on these fence-mounted advertisements to know the theatre programme; there were no free local papers delivered door to door in those days.

Postal pillar boxes existed at several locations in early days, evidently installed voluntarily by the Postal Department. The Council is on record as having requested the one in Highworth Avenue near Forest Road; this was early in 1922.

Seats for prospective passengers waiting at bus stops were uncommon, but the recent simple plank seat on the eastern side of Forest Road near the Fire Station bus stop, dated probably from the twenties.

Conclusion.

At the time of writing, it is a quarter-century since Bexley existed as a municipal district, and great changes have taken place in that time. One is that, apart from shopping centres, the footpaths of the area have very little use. The motor car has converted most pedestrians into road users.

References:

Minutes of the Borough Council of Bexley, 1900-1906.

Minutes of the Council of the Municipality of Bexley 1907-1948.