



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.
August 1975.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, August 15th, 1975, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Mr. K.F. Tye, Life Member of the R.A.H.S., who spoke to us last year on Major Lockyer, will speak on "Our Historic Buildings" - "Preserve or Destroy"? (Questions - 'What should we do? & What can we do' will be raised.

Supper Roster: Miss Dunsmore, Captain, & Mesdames, McMillan, Lee, McDonald, Miss Cheetham, Miss Callister.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,
President.
Phone 587.4555.

Mrs. E. Eardley,
Secretary.
Phone 59.8078.

Mrs. E. Wright,
Treas. & Soc. Sec.
Phone 599.4884.

Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer.
Phone 587.1159.

The gem cannot be polished without friction. ... Confucius.

The following were elected to hold office for the year 1975 - 1976:

<u>Patrons:</u>	Mayor of Rockdale, Ald. G. Moore. Ald. R. Rathbone Mr. R. Stark, Town Clerk.
<u>President:</u>	Mr. D. Sinclair
<u>Senior Vice President:</u>	Mr. W. Napper
<u>Vice Presidents:</u>	Mr. W. Foster, Miss M. Dunsmore
<u>Hon. Secretary:</u>	Mrs. E. Eardley.
<u>Hon. Asst. Secretary</u>	Mrs. B. Williams.
<u>Hon. Treasurer & Soc. Sec.</u>	Mrs. E. Wright.
<u>Hon. Auditor.</u>	Ald. A. Ford
<u>Research Officer.</u>	Mr. A. Ellis
<u>Publicity Officer.</u>	Mrs. B. Perkins
<u>Lydham Hall Local Committee</u>	Mr. D. Sinclair, Mrs. E. Eardley, Miss B. Otten.
<u>Lydham Hall Fund Raising Committee.</u>	Miss B. Otten, Mrs. D. Prebble, Mrs. M. Smith.
<u>Management Committee:</u>	Mr. D. Sinclair, Mrs. E. Eardley, Mrs. E. Wright, Messrs. Day, Foster, Napper, Ellis, Mrs. G. Gash (with power to add).

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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.

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.

Social. A Bus will leave the Town Hall, Rockdale - Time 1 p.m.,
Date - 20th September, 1975, Cost - \$1.50 per person, to view the Historical Head Stones at the Botany Cemetery. Further details in September Bulletin.
Ring Mrs. Wright, Social Secretary - 599.4884.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY.

Income and Expenditure Account for the Year Ended - 30th June, 1975.

<u>INCOME.</u>		<u>EXPENDITURE.</u>	
Balance as at Bank - 30.6.75		Bond Printing Co.	\$ 105.00
	\$ 614.44	Mascot Press	\$ 753.20
Members' Subscriptn.	\$ 191.10	Royal Hist. Delegate	\$ 10.00
Royal Hist. Grant	\$ 50.00	Jannali Bus Tours	\$ 70.00
Donations	\$ 38.88	Book Presentation	\$ 6.95
Sale of Badges	\$ 9.00	Xmas Party	\$ 13.85
Sale of Scy. Books	\$ 232.53	Ador Hiring Service	\$ 22.15
Sale of Council Books	\$ 5.00	Royal Hist.Scy.	\$ 12.50
Proceeds from bus trips		Petty Cash-Miss Otten	\$ 2.56
per Mrs. Wright	\$ 151.96	National Trust	\$ 6.30
Bank Interest	\$ 13.70	Postage & Petty Cash	
		- Mrs Eardley	\$ 200.15
		Bank Balance in hand	\$ 103.95
Grand Total	\$1,306.61	Grand Total	\$1,306.61

Having examined the Books etc., supplied to me, by your Treasurer Mrs Wright, I wish to advise that the Books have been properly checked and kept in a very satisfactory manner, and hereby certify that the above figures show a correct record for the year ended, 1975, at 30th. June.

(Sgd.) Arthur Ford J.P. 12.7.75

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 30th JUNE, 1975.

I have pleasure in presenting the President's Report for the past twelve months and at the completion of the fourteenth year of our Society's activities.

As in former years, we met on twelve occasions, at eight of which we were addressed by a guest speaker. At one meeting a member of our own Society gave a talk, whilst on two other occasions we were fortunate in viewing slides taken by members whilst overseas. Our Christmas meeting, for the first time, was held at Lydham Hall with the object of not only gathering in an old world atmosphere, but also of affording members the opportunity to see the progress made in restoring and refurbishing this fine old house.

It is gratifying to report that our average attendance at these meetings totalled 60 people.

A number of outings was arranged during the year, and for the fourth time, a three day trip - this time to Canberra - was held on the Eight Hour Week-end.

In all our activities we need the support of members and I would like to draw attention to the need to join in our outings and for those able to do so, to help in showing visitors through Lydham Hall at the week-ends.

There is also need to research and record the history of our district, and in this field of endeavour members who are interested could make a real contribution.

Our Society would not function without the efforts of those members who willingly assist during the year - the office-bearers, Miss Otten and the ladies on the Fund Raising Committee, the supper roster and the museum roster - to each one I express our real appreciation for their help.

- Donald Sinclair
President.

COPY OF AN EARLY SETTLER'S (THOMAS BIRKBY) LETTER TO HIS FATHER.

MAY 31st, 1836.

By courtesy - F. H. Hill - 16th April 1975.

Thomas Birkby is Mrs Hill's great grandfather.

Extract from Mitchell Library Records - Reference DOC 319.

BIRKBY, THOMAS.

Letter by Thomas Birkby to his father from Sydney dated 31st. May 1836, giving an account of his voyage to Australia, July to October 1834, and an account of the Colony.

Birkby was overseer on Sir. T.L.Mitchell's farm at Cateract, Nepean River, then Overseer on A.B.Spark's farm at Tempe. The letter gives inter alia, lists of wages and prices.

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Dear Father,

I hope this through the will of Divine Providence will arrive safe at its destined port, and find you well with my ever dear mother and sister in good health, as it leaves me with my wife and family. We have still but two children, but had the misfortune to lose one, Fanny, in five weeks after we landed, she died in convulsive fits in a very few hours. We have another little girl born October 17th, 1835, we call her Mary Hellen. Richard is getting a fine boy, he often talks about you, also is very forward at lerning and of the most quiet and excellent disposition. In obedience to your wishes I write you an account of our voyage out, and also an account of this Colony at least as far as I am able, but what I state of Husbandry, Agriculture and Manual Labour in general, may be took as a fair criterion to go by.

First of our voyage out. We left London on 18th July, 1834 and on the 15th lost sight of land, with a fair wind for the Bay of Biscay which we entered on the with a stiff breeze and a very heavy sea running, which being the first, made most of the passengers sick. We reached the Island of Madiera on the morning of the 24th. Distance 70 miles with fine weather and a pleasant breeze. We had a run of fine weather up to the 17th of August on which day we crossed the line and from that till the 27th when we experienced a gale of wind from the Sth. W and from that to the 12th September we experienced little else, but thank God we had little if any sickness amongst us. On the 14th in the morning it came on a heavy gale of wind, which kept increasing in violence till the evening of the 15th when the sea ran mountains high and night so dark that one could scarce see half length of the

ship, on the morning of the 16th about 4 o'clock, a sea struck the vessel amidships taking with it all Larboard and part of the Larboard Bulworks, and everything on the Deck fore and aft, that was not lashed down, tearing away the cover and Battings of the main hatch, and filling the Guns Dock wher the family slept in three or four feet depth of water, and as the vessel roled to and fro scors of them was washed out of their beds, then to here the screams and prayers and promises maid by some and the oaths and curses uttered by many was shocking to here, but still a great deal of the in it some that passed off as single women calling out for their husbands and famylyes and wishing they had never left them, and others confesing to things that they never intended doing, but Death staring us all in the face at the time, maid many pray in Ernest that seldom did, but still the storm kept increasing. When daylight came it was some relief from the Horrors of the Storm, which then increased more than abated.

At nine o'clock our main top sail, main fore sail, and fore top sail was carried away and we had four feet of water in the Hold. All the female part of the passengers were at that time, was down below and all the men that was able called to the pumps and by great exertion, through the will of God, we got the water down to fourteen inches. By eleven o'clock the wind had then a good deal abated, but still a heavy sea running, at twelve the weather more clear so that our Captain was able to make observations, being then distance from the Cape of Good Hope 200 miles. By one o'clock the ship was laying to one side with her head to the wind in which state we lay for two days, binding new sails and fitting up temporary Bulworks. On the third day the wind being fair we were again enabled to proceed on our voyage. Many of the passengers at this time being unwell from the affects of the late storms, but I am happy to say that we with my wife and family enjoyed the best of health both at that time and all through the voyage, but the pleasure of which as regards fine weather were then at an end, having little else the remainder of our passage, but storms and gails of winds on the first of October we made the Islands St. Pauls, the last two Islands in the South seas, situated about midway between the Cape of Good Hope and Sydney being three thousand miles from each place.

It was the first sight of land after losing sight of Madeira on the 24th July. On the 12th October we came in sight of Kings Islands at the endrance to Basses Straits, which straits divide Van Dieman's Land from New Holland, at which place our voyage had like to have terminated fatally, through the neglect of the Officers on watch, the sea was nearly a dead calm when we entered the Straits, but on our nearing the land about ten at night there was a very heavy ground swell running in, with breakers and a heavy sea at the same time the ship rolld till the main yards

touched the water but at the critical moment the Captain came on Deck, saw our danger, called out but it was too late for the ships to answer to it and but for the will of almighty God who caused the wind to blow in an instant from the land, we had few of us lived to have told the tale but thanks to His goodness and mercy we were again enabled to proceed on our course but with great caution during the night. Next morning having a fair wind the sail was set to enable us to get through the Straits as much as possible by daylight, the most difficult of which was accomplished before night and in forty hours from our entering we was clear of all dainger from then, and again out to sea. The straits I have here mentioned is about 80/100 miles long, full of rocks rising out of the sea, at an unequal distance as far as the eye can see. Some of them not more than half a mile apart, making the passage through them at all times dangerous, and without a fair wind impossible.

The reason that it is at all attempted is that, it is 700 miles nearer than going around the Coast of Van Dieman's Land. Our voyage was now drawing fast to a close, and in five or six days more we made land, the land of our exile, on 23rd October we came within sight of the long wish for a Lighthouse, at the head of Port Jackson, and at 10 o'clock on the night of the 24th we anchored in what is called the middle harbour, the pilot came on board next morning, and at nine o'clock we wheighed our anchor and sailed up the harbour to the town and drops our anchor at the Breast of Daws Battery about twelve at noon. The scenery on both sides of the harbour is I think the finest I ever saw, being composed of Rocks Trees and native shrubs, with here and there a cultivated plot of Ground. I went on shore next day and had the good fortune to meet with a kind good friend in the version of a Mr. Sheppard, who kept a Nursery near to Sydney, but I am sorry to say he is since Dead. He recommended me to the Surveyor General and with him I engaged weekly at 30/- per week. I remained with him at that for nine weeks. I then agreed with him to go up the country about sixty miles to be Overseer at his farm on the Catarack and Nepean Rivers, which consisted of 5000 acres of land, but the major part of it little worth. My salary for being Overseer was 50 pounds per year with a house and meat for myself and family, but finding by his account that he was unable to pay that amount of wages, I then came down to Sydney and engaged with my present master, Alexander Brady Sport (Sparke) Esq., to be Overseer at his farm at Tempe Cooks River at which place I have been about 14 months and I believe he is one of the Gentlemen of the Colony. He is an old Batchelor and makes gardening his Hobby. Our farm consists of 250 acres most of it preffy good, but we have none of it under cultivation excepting new garden that I am making about ten acres, for working which I have thirteen convict labourers.

I think I have given you the heads of my proceedings from my sailing from London to being settled in New South Wales and will now give you my thoughts on Emigration to this Colony, of the working chaps of people both male and female. Of the former, a man with a large family has no business here if his sole dependance be his Hand Labour. I knew day Labourers for there is plenty of them.... by servitude, none which gets more than a Guinea a week, and a greater part of them 16/- or 18/-, any kind of mechanic will do better, the common rate of wages being for Carpenters 2 pound or 2.5.0 of Farm servants which as can plough well will get from 15 pounds to 20 pounds per year and their meat. I would not advise females of any description to come out here free, without they have respectable friends to come to such as rely upon the Emigration Committee, and their Agents, all will find themselves grossly deceived on their landing here.

Instead of having many advantages they will find all to be the contrary. There is a few that does well, but not above one in fifty. They are sent from the ships to the Barrack Sydney. Anyone that wants to engage a free girl is admitted at certain hours of the days, to make their choice of such as is likely to sute and at the same time they are aware that the Poor Girls, after being so long confined are anxious for a little liberty. They will offer them perhaps 8 pounds or 18 pounds per year, very few of them exceeding the latter sum, then comes the worst. After being in their situation a short time it does not sute them or them it, then what is to be done Without money or friends and sixteen thousand miles from home, they are then cast upon the world destitute of all the neccessarys of life, and the only alternative they have been left is to go on the town and of which there are many hundreds at this present time in Sydney and many more is tried at the criminal court for petty thefts committed through want and misery and transported for three or seven years to Van Dieman's Land. I have been many that came on our ship going through the streets of Sydney without a cap to their heads or shoe to their foot, and not a place as it were to lay their heads. They are a great deal wors off than convict females, for they must be provided for by the Government, assigned to settlers as servants.

Provisions of all sorts with the exception of flour is moderate in price, the following list of prices you may take as pretty correct.

Bricklayers	2 pounds to 2.5.0
Stone Masons	2 pounds
Cutters of Stone	2 pounds 10.0
Shoemakers	2 pounds
Tailors	2 pounds
Blacksmith	2 pounds 10.0
Plasterers	2 pounds 10.0
Painter	2 pounds

Bread	5d to 7d to the loaf
Beef	2d 1b. by the quarter
Mutton	3d to 4d by the joint, sometimes cheaper.
Poark	7d to 8d 1b.
Veal	about the same
Sugar	3d per lb.
Tea	1/6 to 2/- per lb.
Soap	6d per lb.
Rice	3d. " "
Tobacco	2/- Collonial
Tobacco	3/6 American

Clothing of all sorts about 20% dearer than in England.

Cattle of all kinds is very plentiful in the Interior. You may buy a very fine bullock for a pound. I have bought myself 7 milking cows 2 sheep, one bullock and three calves for 16 pounds, sheep is more dear being from 1 pound to 1.5.0 per head. Good ones will fetch from 15 pounds to 20 pounds. Poultry and eggs is usually very dear being seldom cheaper than 4/- to 5/- for a couple and 16/- to 20/- for a dozen. Butter seldom up to 1/6 per lb. fresh fruits of all descriptions are plentiful with the exception of apples, gooseberrys, currants and rasperrys but we have peaches nectarines, almond, grapes, pomegranites, citrus oranges, lemons, passionfruits, quinces, mellons of all kinds and cucumbers in the greatest profusion. The peach season commences about Christmas and continues on till May. I have seen them sold in the market for a shilling a bushell, and as fine both in size and flavour, as any I have seen in England at 2d. per dozen. Vegetables of all kinds are grown here to the greatest perfection in the Winter say from April to October, but are generally very scarce in Summer, the weather being generally very hot and dry for three or four months with the exception of thunderstorms, which are at times very heavy, the weather is subject to very sudden changes. I have known the thermometer to be as high as 100 deg. by day and to fall as low as 58 deg. in the evening. We have what is called the hot winds which always blows from the North so hot as at times to burn up the growing crops and make birds to fall from the trees as if dead, but it is sure to be followed in the evening by rain, which again refreshes the air and restores vegetation. The natural production of this Colony in Eatable fruits and vegetables is very scarce, of the former there is only two which I have seen. The one a species of Raspberry and the other that of the *Misebryanthemum Australis*, neither of which are much good, and of the

latter the New Zealand Spinach is the chief. It grows wild all over the Colony, in Botanical production it may vie with any Country in the World.

Woods of never fading green and of Boundys Extent, the underwood of which is composed of thousands of the finest species of plants, sum of which are always in flower. But of all Floras variety she one great fault, that is production have a tendency to be of a yellow colour. Insects are numerous and of Podley's variety, quite different to what you have in England. Fleas and mosquitoes are very troublesome and there is a large fly that will blow whiss at the fire with living maggots near half an inch long.

Don't think I exaggerate, for I have seen a Beast heart five minutes out of the Oven, not eatable. The native honey-bee is a male insect no bigger than a black ant, but very productive in honey. Birds are in great plenty, Parrots, Cockatoos, of every size and colour, Hawks of many kinds, wild ducks pidgeons, wild geese, Crains Kirlus, Snipes with Emus, birds some of which stand 7 feet high, Black swans with many others too numerous to mention, but which is all free to the sportsman, as we have no game laws here so consequently we are without Gamekeepers.

Reptiles are very numerous and many of them deadly in their bite, amongst the different variety of snakes there is the Black whip, Grey, Brown, Yellow and Diamond kinds, of the latter I have seen one 12 feet long, the different kinds of lizards are numerous and some of them very pretty. The different kinds of animals are very limited, seen all of the Pssum tribe with the exception of the native dog which is something like English Fox and is hunted here in the same way. Aborigines or black natives are I think the most miserable dirty creatures I every saw. They are idle to a degree, never looking out for anything to eat till they are obliged through the cravings of nature. The tribes on the coast are very expert at spearing fish which constitutes their chief living, in preparing of which, they throw it on the live coals, without either washing or cutting, and in which state they eat it when scarce warm through. The animals they eat are cooked just in the same way without being skinned or their entrails took out. Their chief delight is in a state of nakedness with their bodys besmeared over with grease. Their habitations if they may be so called are as Rude as can be conceived, not of wood, but is maid of the bark of a simple tree, bent in the middle and placed on its two ends on the ground affording shelter to only one miserable tenant. Besides these bark huts, they make use of caves in the Rocks, in which they lie down like beasts in their Dens, they are by no means different in personal courage and in their pitched Battles, display the most determined

bravery. They have some idea of the future, like believing when they die, they rise up white men and when White men die they rise up Kangaroo. They are very fond of Tobacco and any kind of intoxicating liquors. A little information respecting the convict and their usage here, it will be interesting. On there landing in Sydney they are sent to Barracks which are appropriated for their restitution, and what is wanted for the use of Government is sent to their different stations.

The rest are then assigned out as servants to the Settlers and in applying for which a certificate must be produced signed by two Magistrates and Chief Constable, as to the right and capability of keeping such assigned servants. The master on receiving his servant pays one pound sterling for every such servant received, there is a regular scale laid down by the Government to the Master for feeding and clothing such servants as follows - 7 lb. of beef, 9 lb. of flour, 2 oz. of salt, and 2 oz. soap weekly. It is optional to the Master if he gives them anything else. In clothing they have two pairs of trousers, 2 pairs of shoes, 2 jackets, 2 shirts and one hat or cap annually and one blanket.

For insolence to their Overseer they get 20 or 30 lashes, and if often repeated they are sent to work to crush stones on the Public Roads for six or twelve months. I never was before a Bench of Magistrates at home but I have been three or four days in a week here, but it is impossible to govern them without being severe and the Criminal laws are very severe. I must now conclude with my best love, with that of my wife and family to you, and my Mother, Sisters, Uncle Robert, Aunt Smith and all my cousins and remember me to all Enquiring Friends more particularly to Mrs. Tyler, from her I received many kind wishes, and give my duty to Mr. Bland if you think it proper. On taking up an English paper I was glad to see he gained the Trial of York with 1000 pounds Damages.

God only knows if I shall ever again visit my native home, but if not let us all prepare to meet at a Better. I am contented where I am and have no fear but doing well and there is certainly better prospects of bringing up a family here than at home, for such as we are about the Common Rank of Day labourers, but of them we have already too many.

You will receive this letter about the middle of October per ship Miss Ingliss and hope you will answer it as soon as possible. It will then come by the ships which generally sail the beginning of November. You will see the advertisements in the London papers, and shall be glad if you will send me 1/2 doz. of the following kinds of Roots. Crocus of sorts, Snowdrops, Tulips as many as you can, Tiger Lillies the same, Narcissus, Daffodil, Ranacular

Amarylis, as many as you possibly can. Ask of any of your friends and send me Bulbs of any kind you can get, and flower seeds of anything you have now. Let them be packed in the following manner - the Bulbs perfectly dry and everyone wrapped in a separate paper, and packed in perfectly dry chaff in a one inch deal box, jointed well and put together with white lead and the lid put on with the same, and be sure to pack them well so the box be well filled and put on with paint the following directions to me to the care of -

To be kept
dry.

A.B.Sparks, Esq.,
George Street
Sydney (N.S.W)
New South Wales.

From your loving and affectional son,

THOMAS BIRKBY.

By WILLIAM HUTCHINSON, September 3rd. 1839.