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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.
December 1975.

Dear Friend and Member ,

Our Christmas Meeting will be held as usual, on Friday, December 19th, 1975, meeting place, Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale, at 8 P.M. Some very interesting movie films will be shown, per courtesy of the Rural Bank, These you will enjoy for about an hour, then you will be invited to participate in the traditional "Christmas Supper", which is provided and prepared by our very wonderful ladies.

Do come along, bring yourself and friends, and don't forget the "Plate". We look forward to meeting you all on this "Festive" occasion.

Once again:

Time: Place:

8 p.m. Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

Supper Roster: Captain. Mrs. Day, and as many ladies as possible to help please.

Mr. Don Sinclair,
President.

The President and Officers extend the Season's Greetings to all.

A limited supply of the following books, written and illustrated by the late Gifford Eardley (reprinted by popular request) are now available, cost \$1.00 each, postage 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 Otton 'Phone 59.4259.

ALSO Smith's Florist Shop, Tramway Arcade, Rockdale.

Society Badges are available - \$1.00 each.

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Miss Otton, 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 Otton, Phone 59.4259. Your call will be appreciated.

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We would like to say "Thank you" to all who have either Donated or Loaned their precious "Bits and Pieces" to make Lydham Hall so interesting and attractive.

Mrs. Dalziel, Willow Pattern Serviettes. Donated.
Hurstville.

Mrs. Nelson, Warden's Helmet) 2nd World War, Donated.
Beverly Hills. Gas Mask)

Mrs. Connor, Trouser Press) Donated.
Beverly Hills. Tie Press)

Mrs. Lee, Piano Stool) Donated.
Ramsgate Guitar Zither, over 80 yrs. old.)

Mrs. M. Walker, Collection Blue & White Crockery, Donated.
Bexley.

Mrs. Wright,	White Marcella Quilt.)	
Bexley.	Pillow Shams & Bolster Sham.)	Donated.
	Collection of Doyleys, and small white)	
	linen table cloths.)	

Mrs. Greenlees,	Blue & White tea towel - Old Sydney Town Production.
Carlton.	Donated.

Mr. Dicken,	Large Wooden Pastry Board.	Donated.
Bexley North.		

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- *being a brief political history
of the St. George District.*

- *by R.W.Rathbone. (Reprint - 1966)*

With the possibility of yet another Federal Election continually being canvassed by our sensation-seeking press and our election happy politicians, is rather appropriate that we should have a look at the political history of our own St. George District for it has long been recognized as the most sensitive political barometer in Australia.

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The seeds of responsible self government in N.S.W. were sown almost from the time the first white man set foot on the shores of Sydney Cove for although the Colony was originally intended for convicts alone, the sheer inability of the authorities to feed them caused Governor Phillip, as early as April 1790, to ask the Home Government to send out free settlers with agricultural experience.

So successful were his efforts that by 1795 the Colony was completely self-supporting and by 1828 free settlers outnumbered the convicts.

In order to mollify the grievances of the free settlers against the autocratic and often quite hostile actions of the Governor, a Legislative Council of five nominated members was appointed in 1824. It consisted of the Lt. Governor, Colonial Secretary, Chief Justice, Principal Surgeon and Surveyor General. In 1829 this was increased to 15 members.

In 1825, William Charles Wentworth had begun to demand political representation in the Legislative Council but it was not until July 1842 that the British Government passed a new Constitution Act which provided for partial representation of the colonists.

The franchise was extended only to those persons who owned freehold property valued at pounds 200.0.0 or more or a dwelling with a rental value of at least pounds 20.0.0 per annum.

It was proclaimed in January 1843. Electoral Districts were soon arranged and writs issued.

The area we now know as St. George found itself in the Electoral District of Cumberland which covered the whole of the region between the coast and the Hawkesbury - Nepean River system, except the City of Sydney which was a separate division and the towns of Windsor, Penrith, Parramatta, Liverpool and Campbelltown which together

constituted the Electorate of Cumberland Boroughs.

If the people of N.S.W. were indifferent to the advent of parliamentary government (as most historians would have us believe), they entered into the election of their first Representative Council with an enthusiasm which belies this. In fact, they seemed to find the diversion highly entertaining.

Because of the scattered nature of the settlement and the poor means of communication, polling took place over a period of six weeks.

Sydney was the first seat to be decided and there were five candidates for the two representative seats it contained. These were the seasoned and politically astute William Charles Wentworth and his right-hand man Dr William Bland; a personable young military officer Captain Maurice O'Connell; a newly arrived barrister named Hinton William Hustler and the notorious, gin-swilling king of Sydney's underworld, Robert Cooper.

As there was a general agreement on all major issues, the election was fought entirely on personalities and right from the start it was a no-holds-barred contest. The Wentworth-controlled organ, "The Australian" was the main propaganda medium for the first mentioned candidates.

O'Connell was dismissed as "an imposter, young, inexperienced and totally unworthy of the popularity he enjoyed. "Hustler's candidature was described as "deliberate a piece of effrontery as it would be possible to imagine", whilst Cooper received the full blast of "The Australian's disfavour being described as" of such a stamp both morally and mentally as to render it a deep insult for anyone to suppose for a moment that the electors could be made or base enough to make him their representative."

Even the infant "Sydney Morning Herald" took some pains to point out that "if it be an accepted political practice that the low and unlettered were to represent the educated and refined, Mr. Cooper would have strong claims to our support."

Nomination Day was Tuesday, June 13th and before a banner-bearing crowd of five thousand of Sydney's populace assembled before a large timber platform called the Hustings in Macquarie Place, the Returning Officer and Sydney's first Lord Mayor, John Hosking, introduced the candidates to the electors. It was the custom in those days for someone to formally propose and second each candidate who then addressed the gathering before a show of hands was taken. As there was no certainty who, in the crowd, possessed the right to vote and who did not, any defeated candidate could demand a ballot.

Cooper and O'Connell may have lacked experience but they gave their opponents a painful lesson in political organization on that memorable day. Supporters of Cooper and O'Connell packed the square. When Hustler rose to speak he and his proposers were inaudible above the constant hooting at the foot of the hustings steps. Bland, in endeavouring to get onto the platform was "thrown down with violence and received such an injury that he was carried to his residence in an unconscious state." O'Connell was greeted with considerable enthusiasm whilst Cooper, who addressed his followers from the back of a cart, was boisterously cheered.

Only a most generous appeal to the mob by Captain O'Connell enabled Wentworth to be heard but when he rather ungraciously referred to the O'Connell family's Catholic ties (although O'Connell himself was an Anglican) "a clamour of yelling and hissing broke out and absolute confusion reigned for a quarter of an hour during which time several boxing matches took place and Wentworth's banner and portion of the hustings were utterly demolished." And when Wentworth accused Cooper of having promised to support him then of putting himself forward as a candidate, the rest of his speech was lost in uproar. A show of hands indicated a clear win for O'Connell and Cooper whereupon Wentworth and Hustler demanded a poll.

Voting, which involved writing the candidate's name on the front of the ballot paper and the elector's on the back, took place some days later.

If nomination day had been a riot then polling day was a hundred times worse. So violent did passions run that the poll in the Gipps Ward (Miller's Point) part of the city had to be suspended when Wentworth supporting seamen armed with harpoons clashed with O'Connell sympathisers and levelled the polling booth. Supporters of rival candidates had their carriages upended and their windows smashed. One man was killed whilst Dr. Whittle, a known Wentworth advocate was thrown from his horse "receiving a severe contusion on his head." With the aid of a detachment of the military, the poll was at last completed, Wentworth and Bland having a substantial majority over O'Connell with Hustler and Cooper sharing equal last place.

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The election in neighbouring Cumberland was held a fortnight later and although free from the violence of the Sydney poll was every bit as dramatic. Cumberland was also entitled to elect two members.

Those who nominated were the highly respected and surprisingly liberal James Macarthur "son of him to whom the colony is indebted for its main export"; William Lawson, old, esteemed, honest and upright, one of the trio who had crossed the Blue Mountains in 1813 and an ardent supporter of his friend W.C.Wentworth; George Robert Nichols, a radical

and a reformer, former editor of "The Australian", the colony's first native born solicitor - once a man of means but since the 1842 Depression somewhat disillusioned and financially embarrassed and John Ryan Brenan "a nominee of the publicans and their class"... one of the colony's three police magistrates.

There seemed little doubt that Macarthur and Lawson would have an easy victory. At the eleventh hour, however, there occurred an event which made the Cumberland poll perhaps the most bitter of the whole election. This was the last minute nomination of wealthy landowner Charles Cowper for the Cumberland Seat. Cowper had contested the nearby Camden Electorate a few days before nominations closed in Cumberland in the full expectation of receiving the support of the influential Macarthur family. He was shocked to find that James Macarthur not only declined to sponsor him, but actively campaigned for his opponent, the Colony's Attorney General, Roger Therry.

A large proportion of Australia's convict population were Irish Catholic political prisoners who were always restive and an ever-present source of discontent. Therry was both Irish and a Catholic. Furthermore, as Attorney General he was a paid government official. In a furious contest in which many charges of bribery and intimidation were made, Therry had narrowly defeated Cowper.

Describing Macarthur as a "Turncoat, a prince of renegades and a patron of white feathers", Cowper threw his hat into the ring with the undisguised intention of avenging his own humiliation. The fight in Cumberland was short and cruel and despite herculean efforts on the part of both "The Australian" and "The Herald" and the patronage of such prominent figures as Wentworth, M'Leay and Alexander Brodie Spark, Macarthur wilted under the Cowper onslaught. In the final stages Lawson completed the rout by switching his support to Cowper.

Cowper with 503 votes topped the poll, followed by Lawson 381, Macarthur 371, Nichols 339 and Brenan 137.

It is not known how many of the handful of settlers residing in the Parish of St. George who were entitled to vote bothered to make the terrible day-long journey along the deeply rutted track called the Illawarra Road, across the dam at Cook's River to the nearest polling place at Woolloomooloo, but any who did make the effort would appear to have voted for Cowper.

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Our first two parliamentary representatives were very diverse characters indeed. Cowper at 36, possessed a mild and affable nature which concealed a driving ambition. He was a man of outstanding ability and tact and a political adroitness which in later years was to earn him the sobriquet of "Slippery Charlie".

His father was the Rev. William Cowper, a colonial chaplain under Samuel Marsden and he had arrived in the Colony at the age of two. His first post was in the Commissariat Department and in 1826 he was appointed by Governor Darling to be Secretary of the Clergy and School Lands Corporation. When this position was abolished by Governor Bourke, Cowper took up land at Corryong on the Upper Murray and began breeding shorthorn cattle.

In an Assembly which numbered amongst its members such historic figures as Wentworth, Bland, Therry, Windeyer, Robert Lowe and the fiery Presbyterian prelate, John Dunmore Lang, Cowper stood out as a fluent and thoughtful debator, a consistent advocate of improved means of communication and an uncompromising opponent of Wentworth. He proposed and chaired many of the Select Committees of the Council, was one of the sponsors of the Sydney Railway Company which built the first line to Parramatta and was an acknowledged expert on taxation procedures and stock diseases.

William Lawson was 69. He had arrived in the Colony as an ensign with the N.S.W. Corps, where he rose to rank of Lieutenant. Packed off to England by Macquarie in 1810, he managed to return the following year and retired to his property "Veteran Hall" at Prospect where he ran a small flock of sheep. In 1813, he joined Blaxland and Wentworth as surveyor in their epic journey over the Blue Mountains and received a grant of 1,000 acres on Campbell's river near Bathurst for his trouble. He explored the Mudgee district and acquired large holdings there. In 1824 he returned to Prospect where he ultimately died. A most likeable old farmer who was affectionately known as "Old Iron Bark", he was a poor speaker, had little interest in politics and the government of the Colony, but conscientiously attended meetings of the Council to support Wentworth with his vote on important issues at a time when many other members regarded membership as little more than a status symbol. One of the very few occasions on which he exerted his independence was when he voted with Cowper in the latter's repeatedly unsuccessful attempts to have meetings of the Legislative Council opened with "PUBLIC PRAYERS to Almighty God." William Lawson was in fact, the first party hack in our political history and did not seek re-election at the expiration of his first term.

... to be continued.

Sanitation.

It has been wisely said that civilisation begins with sanitation! However, it is not intended to elaborate on this important theme, but rather to concentrate on the local "Saniticans" poetic efforts to wheedle a Christmas contribution from householders served on their particular round, a project in which they were, in turn, supported by the gentlemen known as the "Garbo's".

Both groups performed unpleasant, but very necessary duties, and both left their "Christmas Cards" in obvious places they hoped would inspire the generosity of the householders.

A collection of these unique cards has been made over the years. Fortunately for the residents of the St. George District the "Sanitican" no longer has the need to call, his job has been eliminated by the underground sewerage system, hence his "Calling Card" may be regarded as a "Collectors Item".

On the Northern side of the Harbour, the men who conducted this essential service called themselves: "SANITOLOGISTS". (in 1972).

XMAS GREETINGS.

Little Miss Muffett
Sat on her tuffet
With furrows deep in her brow.

A cockroach or spider
Oft sat down beside her
Speeding her exit - and how!

Little Miss Muffett
Sure had to rough it
In those pre-sanno pan days.

She wouldn't be nervous
Today with our service
Of smart and cleaner ways.

So with jolly good reason
In this festive season
Your SANNO MAN is here to say....

.... A HAPPY XMAS.
