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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,  
ARNCLIFFE 2205.  
June, 1976.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, June 18th, 1976.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Mr. Vaughan Evans has kindly consented, once again, to give an Illustrated Address, this time on "Early Colonial Craft". This should be an interesting subject, especially for those who like "Messing about with boats"

Supper Roster: Mrs Day, Captain, Mesdames O'Shea, Samuelson, Longhurst, and Kell.

Ladies please bring a plate

Mr D. Sinclair,  
President.  
Phone 587.4555.

Mrs E. Wright,  
Hon Treas & Soc Sec.  
Phone 599 4884.

Mrs. B. Perkins,  
Publicity Officer.  
Phone 587.9164.

Mrs. E. Eardley,  
Hon Secretary.  
Phone 59.8078.

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

"Laughter has no foreign accent."

.... Paul Lowney

## NOTE TO MEMBERS

Please advise Secretary  
(Phone 59.8078) of any change  
of address - this will save  
disappointment when your  
Bulletin is posted to you.

## SOCIAL NEWS

REMINDER FOR OCTOBER LONG WEEKEND TRIP. Date: 2nd - 3rd & 4th Oct.

A tour of Yass and the Western Districts has been arranged and bookings are being taken; if you wish to go on this weekend, ring Mrs. Wright, phone 599.4884, and she will give you particulars. Details will also be in the Bulletin as they come to hand. This should be a most enjoyable weekend.

Deposit of \$10.00 please.

Date to Remember: A full day's outing has been arranged for your pleasure, this time down the South Coast, with its lovely views. Details as follows:

Date: Saturday, June 26th, 1976.

Meeting Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Time: 9 a.m.

Cost: \$2.50 per person, Children \$1.25 (Pay at June Meeting please)

A Morning Tea stop will be made at "Bulli Lookout" then on to the "Shell House" at Bellambi, lunch at Austinmer, and Home via the South Coast Road. Bookings are now open, ring Mrs. Wright early to avoid disappointment - Phone 599.4884. (Arrangements have been made for Shell House to be open)

Bring your own eats and, most important, your "Cuppa" and enjoy a lovely day.

Further outings will be announced - watch for details.

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 (after 8 p.m.). Your call will be appreciated.

PLEASE NOTE Admission to Lydham Hall from 1st April, 1976, is:  
Adults 30¢ Children 10¢. Weekday Group Visits 25¢.

Phone calls to Lydham Hall after 8 p.m. - 59.4259.

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 (after 8 p.m.)

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

Society Badges are available - \$1.00 each. (See Treasurer)

DONATED TO LYDHAM HALL.

Mrs. W. Foster, Kogarah.	Hatpin Vase and Hatpin Smelling Salts Jar Doulton Coffee Cup "Empire Day" From Civil Service Co-op. Society NSW. Lady Ruth Corsets. Police & Fireman Braces Man's Shirt & 2 collars with studs. Engraved Silver Tie Pin.
Mrs. McCloure, Hurstville.	Black Silk Crochet Handbag. Black beaded handbag. 1 Queensland Railway Timetable 1920. Price 3 pence. Hand book for Electoral Officers.
Mrs. Havalah, Bexley.	Sewing Basket. 1850.
Miss R.M. Camilleri, Pagewood.	1 Edison Record bought at Nicholsons in Sydney 1910.

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BEXLEY SWIMMING POOL

The new Bexley swimming pool in Rockdale Municipality is situated in an open area at the beginning of what old residents knew as the "first gully". It is close to the source of Stoney Creek now known as Bardwell Creek. In earlier times when the water of the creek was unpolluted youngsters had a favourite swimming hole there. The creek now runs in a brick channel.

The flat area where the pool is situated is surrounded on three sides by rising ground, which on the south and east has been attractively landscaped. This work involved a large amount of earth movement, particularly on the east side. Here the old quarry (below the end of Highgate Street) used by the "Small-bore" Rifle Club since 1940, had to be filled. Nearby the derelict Bexley incinerator was almost completely reconstructed for use as a store for the Rockdale Emergency Service.

The Health Inspector of the old Bexley Council recommended the building of a swimming pool on Bardwell Creek in 1932, the entrance to be in Stoney Creek Road, and a Baths Committee was formed to handle the scheme. The Great Depression was then at its worst and efforts to get a grant of £10,000 for the work from the Unemployment Relief Council was unsuccessful. It was then decided to wait until results of the newly opened Enfield Pool's operation for the season were known. Subsequent to 1934 nothing further was heard of the proposal until recent times.

The completed pool and surrounding park were opened for use on December 24th, 1975. The plaque at the Preddeys Road entrance reads as follows:-

"Unveiled by His Worship the Mayor, Alderman H.E. Kibbey,  
on Saturday, 6th March, 1976, at the official opening of the  
BEXLEY SWIMMING CENTRE and its dedication for the  
enjoyment of the Citizens of Rockdale."

Note - "Rockdale" referred to means "Rockdale Municipality".

A.F. Day.  
22/4/76.

## THE COLONIAL MEDICAL SERVICE.

### 1. The General Hospital, Sydney. 1788 - 1848. Part II.

- C.J.Cummins, M.B., B.S., D.P.H.  
Medical Adviser to the Government of N.S.W.

Reproduced with permission from -  
The Publishers  
Modern Medicine of Australia  
January 7, 1974.

## THE RUM HOSPITAL.

After Governor Bligh's deposal the Colony was administered by Major Johnston, Lt.Colonel Foveaux & Colonel Patterson until December 1809 when Governor Lachlan Macquarie arrived. During the interregnum the Colony was divided into factions constantly in a state of conflict with each other. Government administration was disorganised and inconsistent; public works were in abeyance and essential repairs to buildings were neglected.

Macquarie appointed D'Arcy Wentworth to succeed Jamison after the latter's death in 1811. If Jamison were the best qualified Colonial Surgeon, Wentworth was certainly the worst. He had never passed any professional examinations. A brief period of hospital experience in London plus some six years as Assistant to the Surgeon at Norfolk Island were the total content of his qualifications. Wentworth's insecurity in clinical medicine may well explain why he tended to give Redfern a free hand in the supervision of clinical activities in the Hospital, devoting himself to a casual superintendence of its administration. He was more deeply involved in civic affairs and commerce, & was held in regard as a shrewd & affluent businessman. He was Magistrate, Superintendent of Police (which office carried a handsome salary & house) & Treasurer of the Police & Orphan Fund.

Wentworth's capacity & interest in medical administration was derided by Commissioner Bigge as ... *'little deserving of censure or praise'*. Macquarie was extremely tactful in seeking a pension for Wentworth on his retirement in 1818. In his memorial to the Home Authorities he concentrated on Wentworth's *'indefatigable zeal, vigilance, activity, honour and integrity, uniformly manifested by him in the due execution and faithful discharge of his various important Public Duties.'*<sup>28</sup>

William Redfern was another famous name in Australian medical history who was associated with the General Hospital as Assistant Surgeon during Wentworth's superintendence. Born in 1771, he passed the examination of the Company of Surgeons at the age of 19. Without waiting to receive his Diploma he joined the Royal Navy as Surgeon's Mate. His career in the Navy was short. He was involved in the mutiny of the *Nore* in a minor role & sentenced to death, a sentence which was commuted to life imprisonment because of his age. After four years in prison he was transported to N.S.W. in 1801. He served as a convict doctor until 1808 at Norfolk Island, & was subsequently emancipated

by Foveaux, this decision being confirmed by Macquarie shortly after his arrival. Before joining the Colonial Service as Assistant Surgeon, he was examined by a Medical Board comprising Surgeons J Jamison, J.Harris & W.Behan, who pronounced him *'qualified to exercise the Profession of a Surgeon etc., and consequently to fill the situation of an Assistant Surgeon in any Department of His Majesty's Service.'* 29

He was a man of many parts, an aggressive emancipist & protagonist of their rights; friend & physician to Macquarie; active in the foundation of the Benevolent Society & the Sydney Dispensary; Director of the Bank of N.S.W; pastoralist, & after 1819, when he left the Colonial Service, a very successful general practitioner. He was the author of a treatise on the medical consequence of transportation of convicts, & the second doctor to introduce medical education into the Colony when he accepted Cowper as his apprentice at the General Hospital in 1816.

When Assistant Surgeon at the General Hospital, Redfern's loyalties were as much to his developing private practice as to the hospital, and he was rarely to be found there after 12 noon. With Wentworth also pre-occupied with other duties, the needs of the General Hospital were neglected until Macquarie appointed a Mr.R.W.Owen, a Diplomat of the College of Surgeons, as acting Assistant Surgeon in 1817 to support Redfern in his clinical responsibilities.

Despite a testy & often ungracious attitude, even to his patients, Redfern was held in high repute as a doctor. It was said of him .. *'his manner might not be so winning or seductive as might be wished, but then his experience & skill ... made ample amends for any apparent absence of overflowing politeness.'* 30

Redfern was bitterly disappointed in not succeeding to D'Arcy Wentworth's position of Principal Surgeon in 1819, despite Macquarie's strong recommendation. He resigned from the Service & the General Hospital to devote himself to full-time private practice, in which he was so successful that he retired in 1826 to his property in Campbell Fields & returned to Edinburgh in 1828 and there died in 1833.

Lachlan Macquarie, the last Governor with absolute powers, was appointed with specific instructions to bring the Colony to order; to restore authority & to eliminate the causes of the tumultuous & mutinous conduct of the Bligh era. Lord Liverpool had authorised him to act according to his discretion in emergencies which needed prompt & immediate decision. Even so he was obliged to report his actions & seek endorsement.

He was a man of singular determination whose characteristic was independent action. He was not loathe to find the emergency to use his discretionary powers. Unfortunately, his forthrightness was too frequently exercised to override opposition, & in the latter years of his administration he became intolerant, vehement in denunciation, personally vindictive & often spasmodically cruel.



After his arrival one of his first tasks was to establish a town plan & building code. He bombarded the Colonial Office with lists of buildings which were urgently needed, hospitals, barracks, roads and houses, to be constructed of permanent materials. The General Hospital was high on his list of priorities ... *'There will be an absolute necessity for building a new General Hospital as soon as possible, the present one being in a most ruinous state, & very unfit for the reception of the sick that must necessarily be sent to it.'*<sup>31</sup> His mind made up, Macquarie acted without delay. On the 17th & 26th May, 1810, an advertisement appeared in the Government Gazette inviting tenders for its construction, & this before his despatches of the 8th March describing the condition of the Hospital could reach Lord Castlereagh.

The site chosen by Macquarie was on a high ridge of land south of Government House, along which Macquarie formed a new street named after himself. As with most of his public buildings it was to be of noble proportions, to fulfil the requirements of the medical establishment for all time. Seven acres of land were reserved for the purpose, of which one acre was surrendered by the wife of John Blaxland on promise of compensation.

The architect who designed the hospital cannot be determined. There is some surmise that it might have been Mrs Macquarie, who had an interest in architecture which lifted her almost to amateur status. However, her abilities were limited & she had to resort to some of her husband's unwilling subjects to provide architectural drawings & sketch plans.

The design of the hospital was for 3 separate blocks, the central being the hospital proper which was flanked by the North & South Wings, each in harmony with the main building. The wings were intended as residential quarters for the Colonial Surgeons stationed in Sydney, the North Wing as residence for the Principal Surgeon & 2 staff surgeons for the hospital, & the South Wing to accommodate 4 assistant surgeons, one purveyor and one apothecary. Behind the hospital were the kitchens with servants' quarters, & behind each wing coach-houses & stables. Surrounding the grounds was a wall 8' high. All construction was in stone.

The hospital proper was to accommodate approximately 200 patients. It was 287' long, 28' wide & 38' high, of 2 storeys, each completely surrounded by verandahs.<sup>32</sup> Both floors contained 4 wards, each some 60' long, 24' wide & 16' high with a capacity of 20 to 25 patients.

Construction of the hospital was financed by a unique experiment in expediency, for which Macquarie was later severely criticised by Earl Liverpool, who nevertheless had to accept a *fait accompli*. The successful tenderers for the contract were Garnham Blaxland & Alexander Riley, both of whom had previously held Commissions under the Crown; Blaxland as Secretary to Governor King & Riley as Deputy Commissioner at Port Dalrymple. Blaxland had been heavily involved in the mutiny

against Bligh, & there was reason to believe that at the time of the contract he was in serious financial difficulties. Riley was also a doubtful financial risk.

The first tender was submitted on the 10th July, 1810, & was subsequently modified by both Macquarie & the tenderers to the acceptable contract of the 6th November. At this stage Acting Principal Surgeon, D'Arcy Wentworth, appeared as one of the tenderers, so ensuring the financial stability of the contractors. Macquarie accepted Wentworth's inclusion which later he justified on the grounds that Wentworth was a man of rectitude & would ensure that the conditions of the contract were faithfully observed. Subsequently, event proved that Wentworth was a passive partner.

Of greater contention than Wentworth's inclusion in the contract was the method of finance by granting to the tenderers, in return for the construction of the hospital at no cost to the Crown, a monopoly to import 45,000 gallons of rum over a period of 3 years.<sup>33</sup> Originally Macquarie had proposed the sum be free of excise tax - in direct contradiction of his obligations to control the rum trade by the imposition of a tax of 3/- per gallon. The compromise included in the contract was a time interval of 6 months for the payment of this duty. On 2 occasions Macquarie breached this contract by permitting imports outside this monopoly. On each occasion he increased the limit of the monopoly, which reached eventually 60,000 gallons.

The contractors were also granted -

- (i) the labour of 20 convicts, whose services were estimated in value at pounds 20.0.0 per annum each;
- (ii) the use of 20 draught bullocks from the Crown herds (estimated value pounds 5.0.0 each per annum) and
- (iii) 80 oxen for slaughter from Crown of 450 lbs. each (estimated total value pounds 2,700.0.0).

Construction of the building proceeded almost immediately, first the stone wall surrounding the grounds (completed October 1811) and then the main buildings. The foundation stone was laid on 30th October, 1811 and was identified as an occasion of great significance in a Government and General Order.<sup>34</sup>

*His Excellency the Governor intending to go through the ceremony of laying the first stone of the foundation of the new General Hospital tomorrow at 12 o'clock at noon, directs that the colours shall be hoisted at Dawes Battery precisely at that hour, & that a salute of 15 guns shall be fired from the Battery on the signal for that purpose being made from the site of the General Hospital in honour of the occasion of laying of first stone of that building.*

The ceremony, headed by Macquarie & his Lady, was attended by a large concourse of the principal officials of the Colony & their wives, & gold & silver coins, together with an engraved medallion, were placed

in a cavity below the foundation stone.

The building proceeded slowly with frequent conflicts & arguments between the contractors & Macquarie on the inadequacy of skilled labour available, the erection of internal fittings, reduction in the height of the building & the completion date.

Controversy is an entirely different context continued during the erection of the hospital. In October 1814, Macquarie allocated the two lower wards of the northern section as a temporary courthouse for the Supreme Court, this having been suggested by Earl Bathurst as an expedient until a permanent building could be erected.<sup>35</sup> The hospital was then part completed & the necessary adjustments could be made. Judge Jeffrey Bent pressed for additional space for Judges' Chambers & Macquarie, in deference to this request, allotted 2 rooms of the Principal Surgeon's quarters in the Northern Wing. This did not satisfy Judge Bent or his brother, Judge-Advocate Ellis Bent, who were determined to obtain the whole of the Northern Wing to serve as Court House & Chambers. Macquarie refused to be a party to ousting Wentworth, & relegating his accommodation to the Southern Wing, which in turn would have ousted the Assistant Surgeons from their intended accommodation. He made a final determination & granted Judge Bent the 2 top wards in the northern half of the hospital, thus providing for the purposes of establishing the Supreme Court the whole of the northern half of the hospital & two rooms of the Northern Wing.<sup>36</sup> In this Macquarie was supported by Under Secretary Goulburn, & the brothers Bent, still protesting & disgruntled, had no alternative but to accept. Judge Bent used the upper wards as Judges' Chambers, & the rooms in the Northern Wing as his personal residence. He moved to his brother's official house after Ellis Bent's death in November, 1815.<sup>37</sup>

The remaining wards in the southern half of the hospital were occupied by the transfer of patients & stores on the 8th April, 1816.<sup>38</sup> The contractors had invited Macquarie to take possession of the whole of the hospital in March of that year. However, it was not formally completed to Macquarie's satisfaction & handed over until July 1817.

Although Macquarie received much odium & official criticism for his action in authorising this contract & sanctioning speculation in spirits, there was no practical alternative to financing the construction of the hospital. In fact, one official criticism was that as the Colony could not itself finance the project, it was unnecessary. Further details of comparative costs, the debated question of the contractor's profits, & the attitude of the Home Authorities are included in Watson's *History of the Sydney Hospital*.<sup>39</sup> Macquarie is remembered greatly for his unorthodox approach, risking much, & achieving his objective by means which, in retrospect, on this occasion justified the end.

Watson describes the hospital routines.<sup>40</sup> Redfern conducted ward rounds each morning between 8.00a.m. and 12. noon, after which he issued stores & supplies to the wards. Medicines were dispensed by Assistant Surgeon Cowper or a convict assistant. Outpatients attended the hospital at 8.00a.m. & were treated by Redfern prior to his ward rounds. Towards the end of this period the outpatient department was supervised by Assistant Surg. Owens.



The average attendance was between 40 & 60 & most were treated summarily with a single draught of medicine. A midwife (Sophia Syms) was appointed to the General Hospital staff in 1812.<sup>41</sup> There is no indication that this post was continued after the General Hospital transferred to Macquarie Street.

The diet of the patients continued on the same ration scale as distributed to the convicts generally. Wentworth proposed a modification of this scale to provide fresh meat, milk, vegetables & extended amounts of other basic foodstuffs. In his memorial to Macquarie he describes the type of patient for which the hospital catered ..*'with habits ill calculated for bestowing attention to that cleanliness of Body and Apparel and besides it frequently happens that they have but one shirt: & indeed but a single article of each sort with which they are clothed & these perhaps but too generally in a tattered filthy condition.'*<sup>42</sup> Wentworth's proposal was not successful on the grounds of expense, although he did succeed in having approval for a fresh issue of clothing to each patient.

Treatment was restricted, with cupping, bleeding, & purgation frequently applied. Drugs were in short supply & this was the principal reason why single doses of mixtures were frequently prescribed. Apparently surgical procedures were few & major surgery, mainly amputations, were carried out in an improvised theatre in the southern wing.

Watson presents a graphic picture of the conditions in the hospital.<sup>43</sup>

*'The general condition of the Hospital was disgraceful. After the completion of the building, it was found that a mortuary had been forgotten, & to supply this want, one of the kitchens was converted into a 'dead-house'. As the other kitchen was occupied by the overseer & attendant, there was no available space for the hospital cooking. All food was, in consequence, cooked by the patients themselves actually in the wards, & as rations were issued to every patient individually three times a week, each ward was virtually scullery, kitchen & larder combined, in addition to accommodating the patients. The patients were mustered every evening by the overseer, who locked them in their wards in the Hospital at sundown. They there remained until the following morning at 6.00a.m. & so were shut in without overseer, nurses or attendants throughout the night, & the abuses that grew under such conditions may be readily conjectured when we remember the depraved class from which the patients were drawn. The windows, after the overseer had left them for the night, were shut by the inmates, probably to prevent any noise being heard without, & the atmosphere, on opening the wards in the morning, was described as revolting & nauseating in the highest degree on account of congestion of human beings, cooking utensils, & waste materials congregated in the enclosed space without adequate ventilation.'*

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- to be concluded.