



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe. 2205.  
January 1977.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, January 21st, 1977, at 8 p.m.  
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.  
Business: General.  
Syllabus Item: Mr. & Mrs. Foster will present: "America Today", A Study of Its People. (illustrated with slides) for your entertainment.  
This is something you will enjoy.  
Supper Roster: Mrs. Waddington, Captain, and Mesdames Roots & Havilah,  
& Miss Heath.  
Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,  
President.  
Phone 587.4555

Mrs. E. Eardley,  
Secretary.  
Phone 59.8078.

Mrs. B. Perkins  
Publicity Officer  
Phone 587.9164

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

Mr. A. Ellis,  
Research Officer  
Phone 587.1159

The architecture most admired is that which copies Nature's face,  
Though never has it quite aspired to such variety and grace.  
.....David Hope.  
(Friendship Book 1976)

Many of our Members are on the sick list. We are sorry to hear this, and trust that you will all be well again soon.

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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 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" - (Limited Stocks)
- Book 4. "The Arncliffe to Bexley Steam Tramway"
- Also available are: (By the same Author)
- Book 5. "Heritage in Stone" - out of print.
- 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.

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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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### SOCIAL

A trip to Kangaroo Valley is also on the agenda, for early next year.

Date: Saturday, February 26th, 1977  
Meeting Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.  
Time: 8 a.m. sharp.  
Cost: \$4.00 per person.

Mrs. Wright will supply details of this outing.  
Phone 599.4884.

#### 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.

THOMAS & EADITH WALKER.

EXTRACT FROM "SOME HOUSES & PEOPLE IN N.S.W." - G. Nesta Griffiths.

- Reprint from St. George  
Historical Society  
Bulletin - June 1965.

Thomas Walker was born at Leith, in Scotland, on the 34d May, 1804 and came to Australia in 1822, where he entered his Uncle's firm. His mother was Anne Walker, of Perth, sister to William Walker, who built "redleaf" in Double Bay.

The young Thomas within eight years was in charge of the business and became well known as a merchant, pastoralist and shipowner. During 1836 and 1837 there had been a bad drought in N.S.W. and Mr Walker and a party of friends decided to investigate the new country being opened up around Port Phillip. A record of this was published in London in 1838, "A Month in the Bush of Australia; Journal of one of a Party of Gentlemen who recently travelled from Sydney to Port Phillip." It is the diary of Thomas Walker, and reveals a most observant nature.

There is a small wonder that Mr Walker made a fortune - his great gifts of observation and practical knowledge of the land guided his purchases and before long he became one of the richest men in Australia. In 1840 he bought the mortgage on the Yaralla property at Concord. This had been a grant to Isaac Nichols from Governor Hunter, dated 20th December, 1797, and it was increased in 1806 by a further 50 acres. On the estate, which was situated on the southern shore of the Parramatta River, was a small cottage which Mr Walker used as a camp and holiday resort, while he laid out the gardens he planned for the house he hoped to build. This cottage was completely reconstructed by his daughter and still stands as one of the earliest buildings in Australia. He had a great gift for landscape gardening, and the famous garden of Yaralla owed much to his original design.

He married late in life Miss Ann Hart, and they had only one child, a daughter named Eadith. Mrs Walker was very delicate and died in 1870, when her little girl was only a few years old, and Mr Walker then sent for his sister Joanna, to come from Scotland to help him.

For a time they lived at "Durham Cottage" on Miller's Point, as, in the way of Australian fortunes, Mr Walker had sustained heavy losses and the building of his home was temporarily postponed. They took up their residence at Yaralla in 1870, and Miss Joanna, who considered an only child would be too lonely, adopted a little friend, Anne Masefield, and the two girls were brought up together like sisters. In 1893 Miss Masefield married Mr John Sulman, architect, who was knighted in 1924, and it is to Lady Sulman that I am indebted for much of the information about Yaralla in the 'seventies.

The stone for the building of the house was quarried from what later became the swimming pool, and the main rooms were set around a courtyard. About 1897, Mr Sulman made extensive alterations for Miss Walker, and a big dining room, panelled in Australian woods, was built over this courtyard and the hall enlarged.

When they first moved in, the roads to Concord were so rough that they usually came to Sydney by ferry. At that time they had no jetty, and a very skilled Norwegian boatman, Nils, would row them out into the stream, and as the paddle steamer slowed down would slip the boat alongside and the passengers were helped on board. Here in wet weather the only shelter would be behind the paddles, and they would sit with their feet up on the opposite bench, so as to keep dry. Most of their teachers came to them, such as the French and music mistresses, but for dancing they attended Mr Needs academy, where the Oriental Bank stood in O'Connell Street. Miss Joanna had strong Scottish ideas about children being seen and not heard, and it was a strict upbringing. She also had a great fear that some fortune hunter might try to marry her niece for her money.

By 1881, Mr Walker was known as one of the leading pastoralists, and a merchant prince, trading all over Australia and Great Britain, and also with many foreign countries. He acted on John Wesley's famous rule, "Make all you can; save all you can; give all you can." He kept an agent to advise him of cases of distress, which he helped with his never-failing kindness. Before he went abroad in 1882 he placed pounds 10,000.0.0 in the care of his friends, Mr Thomas Buckland and Mr Shepherd Smith, to be distributed among various benevolent institutions. On this trip they travelled via U.S.A., and so on to Scotland, but on each occasion Norway was always an objective, to visit their Archer cousins at Larvik.

Mr Walker died in 1886, aged 82, and his sister only four years later, and Miss Walker inherited not only the fortune but the great responsibilities. I doubt if the actual possession of money ever gave her pleasure, except for the manner in which she was able to help the poor and needy, and entertain her many friends. She had such a stern sense of duty that it was always her great endeavour to use her wealth for the greatest benefit of her country. No Australian could have been more patriotic, and her work during the war of 1914-18 earned her the honour of Dame of the British Empire. Her sympathies were always with the soldiers, which her large legacies to the R.S.S. & A.I.L.A show in the most generous practical manner.

On Sunday afternoons Mr Walker used to take the two girls for a walk to the Point, and all the time his active mind was planning the hospital, which begun in his lifetime, was finished by his daughter, and is known as the Thomas Walker Memorial Convalescent Hospital. Yaralla House itself is now used as a convalescent home for patients from the R.P.A.H, and the big Government Hospital, near the Ryde Bridge, known by its number, 113th, during the late war, is often

spoken of as the Yaralla Hospital.

The late Miss Walker is remembered as "Dame Eadith" and her friends were many all over the world. She never married and travelled extensively. On one occasion she brought back from Norway a little Norwegian house, which was re-erected in the garden, and I remember staying at Yaralla in 1917, when it was used as a workroom for convalescent soldiers who were tubercular and were sleeping in tents in the garden. Her entertainments were lavish, and guests were nearly always transported either by ferry or train till the days of motor cars made it unnecessary. Sometimes, for a ball, she would hire a hall in Sydney, and there was one party when the walls were lined with flowers, so that the guests danced literally in a bower of daffodils. Her children's parties were unique, and a great event in our lives, and the favours for the Cotillions were -reasured for years after.

In spring the white walls of Yaralla were draped with mauve wistaria, and the rose garden, sheltered by tall hedges, was a dream of beauty. There were native trees together with English ones to form long vistas. The rocks around the swimming pool grew ferns and maiden hair, and the mangrove swamps of the Parramatta River fringed the shore with a curious pattern of roots, a lovely effect at the end of the walk bordered by cinerarias.

The house itself I can only describe after the alterations, when the marble hall, with its arched colonnade gave such an impression of coolness and space. To light part of the hall a doorway from the drawing room was fitted with glass shelves and glass fronts, forming a perfect setting for porcelains and the big windows opening on to the verandah from the drawing room led the visitor, as always in this outdoor country, through the room to the view outside. The dining room was panelled in Australian woods, and the furniture specially made to go with the room, over the mantelpiece being the old Scottish motto, "East, West, Hame's Best". The main bedrooms opened on to a gallery; here was beauty, charm, and comfort, all the attributes of a house that is loved.

Dame Eadith visited India for the Durbar in 1903, and built a special room for her Oriental collection. She loved children, and her kindness to all in trouble was unending. Her employees adored her. There is only way to describe her - she had the humility of the truly great.

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LONG WEEK-END TRIP - October 1976.

- *Ralph Dunsmore.*

On Saturday morning 2nd. October, we set forth on our sixth October long week-end excursion. Forty-six of us boarded a Janalli Bus at the Rockdale Town Hall at 8.00a.m. The Captain, Bob Luly, was taking us - he has taken us on several of our trips.

The morning was bright and everybody seemed to be early and all were bursting with expectations of a happy trip. We left right on time (2 minutes past 8). We travelled via Bexley, Beverly Hills, Peakhurst, to the Henry Lawson Drive, through Picnic Point, East Hills to Milperra and on to Liverpool. It was a nice morning and the river with the various picnic spots looked very attractive.

Soon after leaving Liverpool, the weather changed and we ran into a heavy downpour, but by the time we passed Picton the day was fine again. Our first stop was Mittagong for morning tea. We stopped at the park where a carnival was in progress. Some of us had a cup of tea at the C.W.A. rooms. After a short rest we were on the road again heading for Goulburn. The country varied from very rough, scrubby, stony hills to some very nice open, improved grazing land.

Arriving at Goulburn we were taken to the local R.S.L. for lunch. Here we were given a nice, satisfying meal. Opposite was the Goulburn Park and after lunch we saw a wonderful show of colour in the glasshouse. There was Cyclamen on one side, Calceolaria in the other, with Primula Obconica and Schizanthus at the back. The colours were vibrant and very beautiful. The garden beds of giant Primulas were very bright and gave plenty of colour to the surroundings. The highlight of the day for Mrs. Wright was the meeting with Jenette Hindmarsh and husband John, with the two little boys John and Iain. Jenette was the originator of our excursions and took us on our first trip to Gulgong, before her marriage. They came about 90 miles to Goulburn to see us and we were all pleased to see her again ... the two boys stole the show!

Leaving Goulburn we headed for Yass. The country now opened out to open grazing lands looking nice and green and abounding with ewes and lambs and various breeds of cattle. Arriving at Yass we stopped at the Museum and were welcomed by Mrs. F. Crocker who gave us a talk about the history of Yass. After inspecting the Museum, Mrs Crocker guided us on a trip round the town. The first items of interest were Banjo Patterson Park and the small cottage where "John O'Brien" of "Round the Boree Long" fame lived. There were several very nice old buildings with the shuttered windows and iron lace. Yass had the first Private Bank owned by A.B.Triggs and the building is still there. Saying "Good Bye" to Mrs. Crocker we proceeded on our way to Harden. We travelled via Jugiong. The crops en route were very short and although very green, need rain badly if a good harvest is to be hand.

We arrived at the Harden Motel about 6 o'clock and were welcomed by the proprietors Kevin and Jan Lee. Our dinner was served to our rooms



after which we were taken to the Museum. Here we were met by Mr. King, President of the Harden Historical Society, who welcomed us and passed us on to Mr. Littlejohn who explained that their Society has only been in existence for three years. They haven't a permanent building in which to house their items, but they have them laid out very attractively in their temporary rooms. He said he had visited many Museums and decided that every item to be displayed was to be cleaned and put in working order and where necessary, painted. I would say that they have one of the best exhibitions I have seen. The vehicles, machinery, tools, harness, etc. could be put into immediate use if required. We returned to our Motel about 10 o'clock and I think we were all ready to call it a day.

During the night we had heavy rain and thought we may be in for a wet time, but morning dawned and the rain had stopped. We lost a good deal of time over breakfast, but we all enjoyed it when it arrived.

We set out for Young, a distance of about 30 miles - we were passing through undulating to hilly country, mostly sheep and cattle, then into the cherry orchards. The cherry blossoms were nearly finished and the green leaves were showing through. The plums were still out in full bloom and looked very pretty. Arriving at Young, Mr Whish met us and took us to the sundial a little distance away on the banks of the Burrangong Creek where the first gold was found by Mr Regan in 1860. Young in those days was known as Lambing Flat. Most of the gold found was alluvial and was panned on the creek banks. Some of the miners carted their pay dirt from up to a mile from the creek to where they could wash it. Mr Whish told us of the trouble between the miners and the Chinese and how the riot started and it was ended by drawing a line and giving each a portion to work. After inspecting the Museum we were taken to the entrance of the Golf Club, situated on a hill from where we could see the scars of an old gold mine and he explained its working. During his time with us Mr. Whish (who is an orchardist) gave us an interesting talk on cherry growing and explained some of the trials of the growers and why cherries are so expensive. After thanking Mr Whish we left Young, which we all thought was a very prosperous, clean and pretty town. It is really a very wealthy centre. Then we set out for Forbes.

We were now heading for Grenfell, en route for Forbes - the country was mainly sheep, cattle and wheat. The wheat crops, though mainly very green and healthy looking, were very short and needed rain badly. Grenfell did not look as prosperous as other towns and there were a number of empty shops. We stopped at the park where we saw the oldest house of the Town, which had a beautiful Judas tree in full bloom in the garden. Approaching Forbes, we passed the meat works on our left, about 2 miles from the town. We had lunch at Kelly's Hotel about 1.30p.m. and Mr J Hohnberg of the Forbes Historical Society welcomed us on behalf of the Society.

After lunch the womenfolk went to the Arts and Crafts Centre where they made some purchases and admired the handicrafts. We then assembled at the Museum which held a lot of interesting items, including photographs and manuscripts. Mr Hohnberg and Mr S. W. Jones were very keen to show

us through and made us very welcome. Forbes had a record of lawlessness and was plagued with a number of noted Bushrangers, including Ben Hall. We saw Ben Hall's grave in the local cemetery. By this time it was getting late - 5 o'clock and we were too late to enter the Lachlan Village, much to our disappointment. The Village depicts a country village of the 1860-1900 era and has an area of 200 acres. They grow 100 acres of wheat using the old horse-drawn machinery of those days. They have a Blacksmith's shop where the Smith can be seen making various items used on the farm - gates, hinges, eye bolts, and shoeing horses. There are gold mines being worked, shops and businesses etc. It is an educational project and to date 19,000 school children have been brought to it so far this year. We were able to see a schoolroom that is almost finished where they intend to explain the history of, and how our country was developed. Then they will be taken to see in practice, what they have been told. We were all sorry at not seeing the Village, but I think it would need a special trip to see it properly.

Forbes is a Western Town that was never laid out or surveyed - it just grew from the days of the horse and bullock teams. The streets, though wide, run at all sorts of angles. They have some very fine buildings: the C.B.C. Bank, a white two-storey building with beautiful iron lace and shuttered windows; the Post Office, a large white building with many arches, a tower with town clock and weather-vane. St. John's Church of England was a very fine building set in nicely laid-out, well-kept grounds; its stained-glass memorial windows were beautiful and inspiring. There were a number of beautiful Tamarisk trees growing in various gardens. They were all in full bloom. After settling in at the Koala Motel, we went to the Golf Club for dinner. In the morning we set sail for Cowra.

The country now is flat and very rich, producing lucerne, sheep, cattle, fat lambs and vegetables where irrigation is available. The country looked well and the crops, though short were beautifully green. We saw the land being prepared for irrigation, the soil had been graded and levelled and the check banks set out. There were three tractors and machines in one paddock. We went through a fairly large mob of sheep which were in a poor condition, possibly travelling for feed from the drought-stricken Southern Districts, also a large mob of very poor cattle. Some of the cows had very young calves at foot. One could not help but wonder how they felt seeing the rich feed on the other side of the fence. A little further along we passed a paddock of Asparagus. The rows were hilled up about 18" and the Asparagus could be seen poking through the ground along the rows. We passed a second mob of sheep, but these were in a much better condition.

The wheat crops were better grown as we neared Cowra, where we arrived about 10.15a.m. We stopped in the main street for a tea-break and stretched our legs. A light drizzle of rain started as we made our way towards the Japanese War Cemetery. This was laid out by a Japanese architect and is on the same lines as our Lawn Cemeteries. It is really beautifully done, with dark stone paving banked by white and black gravel surrounds. There was a centre memorial and the plaques to the dead were set in rows in the lawn bordered by Japanese Maples.



We had an early lunch at the Services Club, after which we set out for Blayney. The country now was undulating to hilly and very green and lush. There were plenty of ewes and lambs and cattle and the mountains in the distance were shrouded in the low clouds making a very nice picture. We passed through Blayney and on to Bathurst for afternoon tea. Bathurst is known as the Queen City of the Plains, and they have some lovely old buildings. We circumnavigated the Carillon which was surrounded by weeping cherries and the ground was a carpet of petals. Bordering the footpath was a row of pink flowering peach trees, backed by the white cherries. It made a wonderful display.

Leaving Bathurst we headed for Lithgow. The country now was very hilly to mountainous. We passed through the Pine Forests of Sunny Corner and Lidsdale, passing by Lithgow through Hartley and up the Victoria Pass, through Mount Victoria, Blackheath and Medlow Bath, on to Katoomba for dinner about 6.00p.m. We had a long wait here and it was 8 o'clock before we got away. After dinner, Margaret Dunsmore made a speech on our behalf, thanking Mrs Wright for her efforts and Bob Luly for driving us so carefully, also presenting them with tokens of our appreciation.

It was dark by now, Mr Kell entertained us with his mouth organ and we had some very nice singing of old favourite melodies.

We arrived at Rockdale about 10.00p.m, tired, but happy, after a very enjoyable trip.

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