



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.
February 1977.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, February 18th, 1977, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item. Dr. T. Hyde, one of our Members, will give a most interesting talk on 18th - 19th Century Clocks, and will bring some of his own collection for you to see. We should all enjoy this evening.

Supper Roster: Mrs. H. Jones, Captain, and Misses Jean Woods, Helen Turner, Celia Murphy and Nancy McDougall.

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

There is a great fascination in exploring the "Living Past", a difficult task we cannot afford to neglect.

..... E. Estyn Evans.

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.

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 Otten 'Phone 59.4259 (after 8 p.m.)

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

Society Badges are available - \$1.00 each.

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.

This is now a large glass display case upstairs in Lydham Hall. At present it contains a few souvenirs from the various wars. Can you help to enlarge this display by exhibiting some of the war relics which you might have? These will be greatly appreciated, and good care taken of any souvenirs which you might care to loan or perhaps donate. Ring Miss Otton 59.4259.

SOCIAL

A trip to Kangaroo Valley.

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.

92nd Lancer Service.

Date: Sunday, April 3rd, 1977.

Meeting Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.

Time: 8.45 a.m. sharp.

Cost: \$2.50 per person.

This Service is held annually at St. John's C. of E., Parramatta, and is always enjoyed by our Members. This will be the 92nd Anniversary. We hope you will be interested. (Mrs. Wright. Phone 599.4884).

DONATED TO LYDHAM HALL.

Mrs. R. Baker, Black Silk Apron. Embroidered.
Kogarah.

Mrs. A. Dick, Glass Wine Decanter.
Bexley. Fauldings Seidlitz Powder Tin.

Mrs. Dickson, Leather Razor Strop.
Oatley.

Mrs. Walker, Willow Pattern Cheese Cover.
Bexley.

Miss Wood, Knives, forks, tablespoons and dessert spoons.
Arncliffe.

Mr. Bradshaw, 1 Schweppes Soda Water Syphon.
Kiama. 1 Marchants Syphon.

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.

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HISTORY OF FAMILY STORE - "TURNER BROS." - KOGARAH.

1906 - 1975 -- Sixty-nine years in the Retail Trade.

- *Lilias Barrack*
(nee Turner)

"Closing?" - "Not Turners!" - "It wouldn't be Kogarah without them!"
"No - Turners aren't going - why, they've always been there!"
"What's the take over?" ...

Early 1975 rumours and speculation increased, changes within Turner Bros. were evident - dress materials had gone, men and boys' wear had taken over the main area of the ground floor, haberdashery had moved, linen and towels had moved further along Railway Parade, towards the subway. Something was afoot!

Rumours became reality in April when staff, then customers were told - Turner Bros. were closing!!! There was no "take-over". For sixty-nine years the Turner family had run the store, but sheer economic pressures, the growth of large shopping complexes and discount stores all added to the increasing difficulties of running a family store in the mid-seventies. So the decision was made - albeit, reluctantly. Turners, as Kogarah had known it for so long, would no more. One of the last remaining family stores, Turner Bros. was well-known within and beyond the St. George District.

Situated on the eastern side of Railway Parade, on the bend of the road, directly opposite Kogarah Railway Station, the store occupied the original site as when first begun by Walter Turner in 1906.

Walter Turner had been apprenticed to a Draper in Norfolk, England and in those days it was regular for a young lad to live with the owner above the store and so gain experience and the feeling of the retail trade. Walter and his wife Emily (nee Hodgens) migrated to Australia and settled at Paddington. From here they looked at a store at Bowral, but decided against this, and finally settled for Charlie Barsby's store, then for sale, at Kogarah. From Paddington they moved, with their family, to a house in Montgomery Street, Kogarah, where the St. George Technical College now stands.

This store occupied the triangular shaped block of land, so well-known in succeeding years as Turner Bros., and is believed to be the first shop erected in the immediate vicinity of Kogarah Railway Station. At that time the store sold millinery, dress materials, manchester, haberdashery, groceries and household hardware. Before long Walter discontinued the grocery and hardware, replacing this section with men's wear. He also spent pounds 600.0.0 on a new shop front. The shop assistants of that era dressed in regulation black, long skirts sweeping the floor, the front of their blouses stuck about with pins and with a tape measure draped around their necks ready for instant use.

Cash transactions were the normal procedure and dockets, cash and change travelled from the shop assistant to the cashier's cubicle, high above the counters, and returned by the overhead cash railway. A most ingenious device used before the introduction of the American cash registers.

Sales have always been an integral part of the retail trade and two excerpts from early editions of the St. George Call give insight to trading at the time of the change-over of the business.

1907 - Barsby & Co. - Rockdale (only) -
Our Great Midwinter Sale -
Commences Thursday July 11th.
Come & secure some of the bargains.

February 1908 - Limerick Competition.

Headmaster Wilson of Kogarah School has adjudicated upon the results sent in for W.Turner's Limerick Competition in connection with his recent sale. The lines were:

A girl came to Kogarah by rail
For bargains at Turner's Great Sale
She said with a smile
As she gathered her pile
.....

The winners were -

- 1st - Mrs Rowd - Ethel Street Carlton.
"I'll buy everything here to a nail"
- 2nd - Mrs Hilda Blake - Junction St Kogarah.
"Your prices would stagger a whale"
- 3rd - Miss Ethel West - Mitchell St Kogarah.
"Go elsewhere than Turners and fail".

The successful competitors are entitled to drapery and clothing goodsto the value of pounds 1.0.0, 10/- and 5/- respectively.

Walter and Lemie (as Emily was affectionately called) resided at their Montgomery Street home with their family of 3 sons and 1 daughter - Percy, Reginald, Norman and Eileen. Walter guided the business through the days of World War I, helped by Lemie, of whom many said she was 'the driving force', with her flashing blue eyes and lively wit.

After the 1914-18 war, two sons, Percy and Reginald entered the business and the store became known as "Turner Bros." By 1928, Reginald had bought his brother out and decided to add another storey to the building and generally update the store. During the re-construction period (1929) Reg moved the store further up Railway Parade, just beyond Montgomery Street, to the shop occupying what is now (1976) the site of the C.B.A. Bank. A large sign outside proclaimed this store to be "Turner Bros - Temporary Premises". An early photograph

of the ten newly re-constructed store shows the telephone number to be "Kogarah - 5". The store retained the name of Turner Bros.

By this time the depression of the early '30s had hit the country and businesses everywhere were in quite a lot of trouble. With hard work, much worry and determination, Reg Turner guided the firm back to normal days.

Reg and his wife Dorothy (nee Twiby) lived in 'Green Gables' on the corner of Queen & Ocean Streets, Kogarah (now demolished) with their family, also of 1 daughter and 3 sons - Liliias, the twins Max and Robert, and Roger. The family maintained close connections with the Kogarah Presbyterian Church.

Reg was the driving force in the business, helped by his wife Dorothy. He took a personal interest in all staff and customers. His firm handshake and friendly enquiry concerning the customer's family is still remembered. Selling was his forte. He knew how to convince a customer that the article in question was just what that particular customer needed. Most of the buying for the store was done from D & W Murray Ltd., York and Market St., Sydney.

Dorothy Turner's grandfather, Mr P Herrmann, Mayor of Kogarah in 1907, called a public meeting to form a fire brigade in Kogarah. At the meeting the brigade was established, officers elected and members enrolled. Is it any wonder the grandchildren and great grandchildren of this family have become so civic minded!

The first break in the family came in 1935 with the death of Emily, followed by that of Walter in 1938.

History repeated itself, when Reg was responsible for guiding the business through yet another war - World War II - through the days of shortages, rationing and coupons. Following cessation of hostilities, Reg was in turn joined by his own family, all members becoming involved in the business of buying and selling.

In the early '30s Reg started a curtain making business. He needed a seamstress and found a widow lady, Mrs Nethercote of Bellevue Street, Kogarah. This lady continued sewing for many years in the backyard room of her home. From this humble beginning curtain making progressed to a small factory at Scarborough Street and eventually to the Curtain Shop at Rockdale in 1966. The post-war boom of building added greatly to the success of this particular venture, especially the opening of the Cronulla and East Hills railway lines.

Many stories of trust, confidence and courtesy could be re-told. Two, both from the '50s, will suffice.

One Bexley family were returning to England for a visit after an absence of thirty years. They paid their account with Turners prior to travelling, but the morning they were to leave, the husband decided he needed a panama hat to wear on the ship. He had no actual "spare cash", but nevertheless went to Turners, selected his hat, explained why he was making the purchase, and was told not to bother paying until he returned from his trip! This he did - six months later!

One Kogarah family remembers with gratitude the gift of the choice of a "pair of towels - any pair at all" - made in recognition of twenty years' custom. Coming so soon after coupons, this was a most generous gift and mother chose the best possible. As she said: "I've never had such towels - never in my whole life!"

1956 saw the firm made into a private company, still trading under the now well-known name - Turner Bros. Max Turner took over the leadership of the store, assisted by Roger and Liliias. Robert moved into partnership with Robert Allan and they still trade at Caringbah, under the name "Turner and Allan", specialising in furnishings and furniture.

Reg retired in the mid-fifties and built a home at Wentworth Falls, called "Rest and Be Thankful", aptly named by his wife, Dorothy. Both continued to maintain a keen interest in the store and never lost touch with their Kogarah friends. A further break in the family came with Dorothy's death in 1972 and that of Reg, in 1974.

Half-yearly sales were a feature of the store from earliest days. Walter first introduced the summer and winter sales, and these were continued by both Reg and Max. Evidence of their genuiness and popularity could be seen by the large crowds waiting outside the store, long before opening time.

Interest-free accounts were introduced early on by Reg - a personal recommendation was all that was required to open an account. A ceiling of pounds 10.0.0 was set for the total amount, and as recently as the '50s, that provided good purchasing power. All that was asked was that weekly amounts in shillings be paid equivalent to the total in pounds. This system ensured regular payments and protected the customer from over-committal. It was only in very recent years that economic pressures forced Turners to charge interest on accounts - such a decision not being made lightly.

Regular part-time employment for students was a feature of Turners. Several young ladies began their careers this way and later joined the full-time staff, serving for several years.

Deliveries were an integral part of store life in the earlier days. Walter's deliveries were by horse-drawn vehicle, Reg saw the introduction of the motor vehicle and Max finally had to abandon deliveries because of rising costs.

Customers in the early days came by horseback or horse-drawn vehicles from the then outlying areas of the Kogarah district - Sans Souci, Sandringham and Doll's Point. Then came the old puffing billy - Kogarah's Steam Tram! All who ever rode the tram, remember it well!!! The last steam tram ran on Saturday July 3rd., 1937 to be followed by the silent, trackless Trolley Buses. These in turn were replaced by the diesel buses, now part of the Public Transport Commission of N.S.W. From the '50s the motor car began to be seen in ever increasing numbers, bringing customers from further afield. The early '70s saw the long-awaited opening of the pedestrian subway linking Kogarah and West Kogarah. Many, now ageing customers, expressed gratitude for ease of access and the saving of the effort of climbing the railway steps.

Sixty-nine years brought many changes to Kogarah, but Turner Bros., were part of it all. The opening of Captain Cook Bridge linking Sans Souci and Taren Point by road, at first brought customers from across the water, but also in turn took customers across the water to the larger shopping complexes.

The family store could compete no longer, and the decision to close, was finally made. But Kogarah is not without Turners as at first thought.

Max moved the men's wear to the new Town Centre (1975) and the haberdashery and 'Wool Baa' to smaller premises along Railway Parade, formerly occupied by the linen and towel section. Roger, who inherited his mother's flair for display and decor, continues to trade in Rockdale, specialising in furnishings.

The fourth generation is now working in the retail trade - Greg, Max's son, trading under the name "Turner's Men's Wear". The fifth generation of Turners have yet to make their mark, in the retail trade, and only time will tell.

The staying power of the staff is indicative of the satisfaction and conditions of employment within this family store. Turners will long be remembered for courtesy and quality and in this, the staff played no small part. Tallying up the years of service by the "old hands" at the time notice of closing was given, shows the following 11 gave a combined service of just over 300 years. Each name will recall its own memory and is recorded as a tribute to all, who over the sixty-nine years of retailing in the St. George District, served the people well.

. Jack Gannon	- 1934 - '74	- furnishings
. D. Hutchens	- 1934 - '70	- Company secretary
. J. Tierney	- 1938 - '68	- Ladies' Department
. L. Taylor	- 1940 - '75	- Buyer - Men's Wear
. Y. Newman	- 1950 - '75	- Buyer - Ladies' Dept.
. M. Walker	- 1950 - '75	- Buyer - Ladies' Underwear
. C. Carney	- 1950 - '75	- Salesman - Towel Shop
. J. Green	- 1950 - '73	- Buyer - Haberdashery
. V. Burgess	- 1950 - '75	- Saleswoman - Haberdashery
. J. Richardson	- 1955 - '75	- Buyer - Wool Baa
. J. Butters	- 1958 - '75	- Saleswoman - Wool Baa.

Once again reconstruction has taken place and another new shop front installed in the building occupying the original triangular block fronting Railway Parade. The business is completely different - Peter O'Reilly moved his Pharmacy from further along Railway Parade. Another well-known St. George family has moved in - Peter being the son of Bill O'Reilly of Test Cricket fame, from a bygone era.

But the name of Turner Bros. can still be seen, despite the changes. The name is still part of the superstructure of the front of the building and still can be clearly seen from across the road or from the Railway steps.

The St. George Historical Society is indebted to Liliias Barrack, a member of the Society, for permission to publish this tribute to her family and for providing the necessary details.

"Early Days of the Kogarah Shopping Centre" - G & E Eardley, St. George Historical Society Bulletin, October 8th, 1971, provided details of shop life around 1906.

The St. George Call provided details of early sale days 1907 - 1908.

- Bronwyn Perkins
Publicity Officer.