



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe. 2205.  
March 1977.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:

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

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: "Thomas West & His 'Barcom Glen' Estate"

Written by Mr. B. T. Dowd, F.R.A.H.S., and presented  
by Sheila Tearle.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Day, Captain, & Mesdames Lee, Nelson, McLeod, Miss  
Smallwood.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,

President.

Phone 587.4555

Mrs. B. Perkins,  
Publicity Officer.  
Phone 587.9164

Mrs. E. Eardley,

Hon. Secretary.

Phone 59.8078

Mrs. E. Wright,

Hon. Treas. & Soc. Sec.

Phone 599.4884

Mr. A. Ellis,

Hon. Research Officer.

Phone 587.1159

It is no good hoping for the best unless you are working for it.

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 Otten '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.

There 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.

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### SOCIAL

#### 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).

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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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## THE "MARCONI" OF ARNCLIFFE.

- Philip Geeves. F.R.A.H.S.

Some years ago I was asked by a local historical society "Did Marconi ever live at Arncliffe?". Some old residents were apparently convinced that he did. The answer, of course, was a firm "No." Indeed, the Italian inventor who gave wireless to the world was never able to find time in his busy life to visit Australia.

But the story of Arncliffe's "Marconi" is worth telling because his activities brought the suburb to national notice.

In the first decade of this century, Australia became acutely aware of a new technological development which was destined to shrink the world - wireless telegraphy, or "wireless" for short. The two leading systems of spark telegraphy were Marconi (British) and Telefunken (German). Unfortunately, the Australian Government had no experts capable of evaluating the different systems, so, finding itself in a dilemma, did practically nothing about the adoption of wireless communication.

By 1910 wireless-equipped ships, including vessels of the Royal Navy, were already in Australian waters, but there was not a single official land station to accept their messages. Naturally, the Federal Government was criticized severely for neglecting the potentialities of this novel form of communication.

There was, however, a small group of dedicated amateurs experimenting with wireless in Australia. Although they were forbidden to transmit messages, they were permitted to explore the airwaves, listening for wireless signals. Radio telephony - the transmission of voice and music - was not yet practicable, so all "wireless" was limited to Morse code signals, composed of dots and dashes.

One of these young enthusiasts was Mr Jack Pike of Arncliffe, a trainee draftsman. He lived with his parents on the western side of Eden Street: the family home was named "Marella". Like all our pioneer experimenters, Pike had built his own equipment because there were then no radio shops in the whole of Australia. He rigged a receiving aerial on his parents' home and sat down to listen for dots and dashes coming from the great silent expanses of the "aether". Most listening was done at night, when wireless messages were distinctly more audible than during daylight. That much was already known in 1910 but it was to be many years before this curious phenomenon was explained by an English scientist, Oliver Heaviside.

Early in 1910 the citizens of Sydney - and particularly the residents of the St. George district - were astonished to open their newspapers and see a banner headline ... WIRELESS FROM AUCKLAND. FIRST MESSAGE RECEIVED. PRIVATE SYDNEY EXPERIMENTER. WONDERFUL RESULTS CLAIMED.

The story continued ... "On Friday night, for the first time in history,

a wireless message from New Zealand was received in Australia. It was sent by H.M.S. Powerful, steaming along on the other side of New Zealand, a few hours out of Auckland harbour. It was received by Mr. J.H.A.Pike, a young unknown private experimenter, at his small station authorised by the Commonwealth Government at Arncliffe. There is no station in Australia capable of sending back a message, and at this moment H.M.S. Powerful does not know that her messages have been received. The next day, Saturday, the Powerful moored in Auckland harbour. That night Mr Pike detected on his instrument several times before 10.0 o'clock a very faint shrill note. It was not at the time readable, but it was the effect of an instrument working, and similar to the peculiar note made by the Powerful's spark.

"Mr Pike's messages have been received on an instrument which he has constructed himself, and with an exceedingly sensitive and delicate detector, his own invention. With aerial wires only 50 ft. in mean height, he is catching messages which pass the warships and liners in the harbour, which have far higher aerials, without affecting them at all.

"The P. and O. steamer Malwa left Sydney on Thursday", Mr Pike said. "That night, when she was about 200 miles down the coast, I heard her calling up the warships in the harbour. The warships in the harbour were calling her up also. But neither of them heard one another. I could hear both."

And much more in this vein. In the days that followed, the Sydney press treated its readers to further chapters of Jack Pike's extraordinary achievements. Like pilgrims visiting a holy shrine, sightseers travelled out to Arncliffe at week-ends to gape at the source of these communication marvels. They loitered about Eden Street, gazing at the aerial and taking photographs.

Pike himself was summoned to Melbourne for discussions with the Postmaster General. Perhaps the Government felt that the young man from Arncliffe could provide some valuable advice about Australia's belated adoption of wireless.

Needless to say, nothing came of it. Jack Pike was merely a talented amateur with no professional training in the complexities of wireless communication. For many years he remained a pillar of the Wireless Institute of Australia and was a greatly respected radio "ham". Before he died he was privileged to see the flowering of the science which now enables us to receive colour television from outer space and to give complex orders to a sophisticated electronic device analysing soil on the bleak surface of Mars.

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## STATION LIFE IN THE EARLY DAYS.

As written for the 'Young Chronicle', November 1932,  
during the Municipal Jubilee of the Shire of Burrangang:

- Mrs S K Hawkins.

### Extract from the 'Young Chronicle' -

"Fifty years ago the Bland was a day's journey from Young. The very rare trip into Young was a day of joy for the children of old Curraburrama Homestead: supplies would go by bullock waggon.

Those were the days of prolific seasons, and the waving grass on some places on the Bland, would completely hide a horseman: sometimes bushrangers appeared on the scene, and once a month there was a church service at Morangorell.

In the following reminiscences of her early life, Mrs S.K.Hawkins tells of those early days on "the Bland", which she says, "were very, very happy days."

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### Mrs Hawkins wrote:

I was born at the old Burrangang Homestead in 1862. My parents, William and Eliza Regan, lived in Curraburrama, then a cattle station which contained 30,000 acres! The distance from Lambing Flat was 50 miles and we drove there in a sociable (a seat in front and two at the back facing each other). It took us a day to do the journey. I remember my father pointing out where the waggons were winding up buckets of earth and working with picks and shovels. On this visit we stayed at the Great Eastern Hotel.

We journeyed from the Bland each year to see the Burrangang races. The buildings were just rough sheds where refreshments were served. Mr James Roberts of Currawong attended in his carriage and later on Mr W J Watson also had a carriage. Ladies rode on horseback (side saddles), their riding habits were either navy blue or black with tight fitting jackets and long skirts and they wore high hats with long gossamers. Parties took lunch and spread the table cloths on the grass, but what horses raced I don't remember. Mr James Roberts was always successful with his horses.

At Curraburrama for many years there were good seasons and the Bland Plains were covered with wild flowers. In some parts the grass was so high that a horseman riding through it was completely hidden. Emus and kangaroos were numerous and there were plenty of wild fowl and fish. Blacks would come to the homestead with fish strung on green rushes and ask for food and tobacco in exchange. They were

rather numerous then and wore possum rugs and blankets pinned round them fastened with wooden pins. They carried their war weapons and always had a number of dogs.

Our new house at Curraburrama was built in 1868 and is still in use (1932) as the station homestead. It was built of slabs, hand sawn, also the flooring boards. My father, to help the builder, placed every board. The house had eight rooms and a wide verandah. The roof was covered with shingles and there were two brick chimneys which cost pounds 15.0.0. (\$30.00) each. The bricks were made at Young and the brick layer came from Young to build them. His name was Thompson. A big kitchen stove, schoolroom and other necessary buildings were erected a little later.

Then living at the old homestead, we were visited by three or four men who said they were cattle buyers. One of our stockmen who had met them on the run came with them as he knew that Mother, the woman servant, we children and an old man Mark Hughes were the only ones at home. Just as Mother was preparing to set their dinner, she recognised one as a bushranger she had seen at Burrangang, so she called the stockman and asked him to tell her if they were cattle buyers or bushrangers. He admitted they were bushrangers, but since they were given a good meal, they would do no harm. After they had dined they rode away. Another day we saw men riding across the plain. We immediately thought they were bushrangers again, so Mother rushed to her bedroom and threw a bundle of bank notes that were securely tied, through her bedroom window into a bed of cabbages, but the men turned out to be police after the outlaws.

We attended church at Morangorell once a month. Rev. George Grimm and Rev. F. M. Seaborn were the ministers. They preached alternately and we looked forward to their visits. Miss Julia McGregor played the organ and the little church was always well filled.

Our life on the station was very happy. We always had school with either a governess or a tutor and after our lessons were finished we would go for a ride or a visit to our neighbours. We often had visitors staying with us in the evenings and we had music and singing and often dancing which passed the time pleasantly.

Our station supplies came \_\_\_\_\_ were brought by bullock team. During a wet winter they were often delayed for weeks but Father ordered in large quantities. During one wet winter there were several drowning fatalities. There were not any bridges in those days and the roads were bush tracks. We received our mail once a week per horseman. The nearest Telegraphic Office was at Young and also the nearest doctor.

In 1875 there was a dreadful drought which lasted for about two and a half years. Thousands of stock perished for want of grass and water. Consequently many squatters were ruined.

Early in 1877 I was fortunate in being sent to a boarding school in Sydney, where I remained for several years and so escaped some of the hardships of bush life during a drought. When ruin came, my Father started life again on the Bland, where we lived for many years.

I might mention that in 1882, Capt. James Innes Lynch came as a tutor to my younger brothers and sisters and remained for eight years. Later he lived at Temora where he died suddenly. Capt. Lynch was at Lambing Flat during the riots and Lynch Street, Young, is named after him.

My Father died in 1890. My parents had 13 children.

In 1882, I married David Hawkins at Young, who was born at Melville Forest Station near Coleraine, Victoria. He came to Young in 1876. His death took place in 1922. There were 13 children of this marriage.

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Mrs Hawkins died in November, 1934. She was the third daughter of Eliza Regan (nee White) whose parents were John and Eliza White of Burrangang Station. John and James White were the free settlers in South West, N.S.W. Their eldest daughter Sarah, was the first white child born in the district (Burrangang). Later, much later, at the age of 95 years Sarah wrote a book called "The Wayback", (meaning 'passage of time').

In 1862, she and her husband Thomas Musgrove built a home "Musgrove House", now called "Quamby" which still stands on the Grenfell Road facing the site of the Burrangang Homestead.

Curraburrama Homestead (approximately 56 miles from Burrangang in Young) was pulled down in the late 1950's. Originally 30,000 acres, it is now about 3 - 4,000 acres. The original shearing shed still stands and is operating, likewise harness machinery and stable buildings.

"Morangorell" (50 miles from Young) is a dot on the map. The homestead was home at one time to Mary Cameron, later known to the world as "Dame Mary Gilmore". Her uncle, Duncan McGregor, was manager and owner of "Morangorell" station. Harry Cameron's father was a fencing contractor and part-time postmaster. Mary Cameron left Morangorell (at about 18 years of age) to go pupil teaching, never to return. Her uncle, her cousin John McGregor and cousin Julia McGregor were in turn postmasters and postmistress at Morangorell until about 1940 when Julia passed away. Morangorell boasted a post office, store, hotel, church and a community hall which might be the only building standing now.

The school Mrs Hawkins went to in Sydney, was "The Sydney Ladies' College" at the corner of Bent and Macquarie Streets, conducted by Miss Flowers.

The Bland was so named by Mrs Harriet Regan, Eliza Regan and Sarah Musgrove's (nee Regan, nee White) mother-in-law. Harriet Regan took up land on an area she called the Lords, "between Barmedman and Wyalong", and later called the area "The Bland" after her doctor in Sydney, Dr William Bland, and the Bland it is to this day. The Bland Historical Society and the Bland Shire at the town of West Wyalong, perpetuate this name on all its documents etc.

Mark Hughes was the first shepherd on Burrangang. He was born in Edinburgh in 1795 and died in 1878, being the first man to shepherd sheep on Burrangang Station. The sheep came from Emu Plains and had subsequently to be destroyed on account of scab. Mr Hughes fought in the Battle of Waterloo. He was a greatly respected and trustworthy man.

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*This article was kindly presented by - Miss G Cuthbert -*

*Granddaughter of  
Sarah K Hawkins.*