



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe. 2205.  
May 1977.

Dear Friend and Member ,

The regular monthly meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, May 20th, 1977, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Mr. Brian Madden, President of Hurstville Historical Society,  
who will address the meeting, has chosen for his Subject, "The  
Background to the Townson Grants". This address should prove  
interesting and informative.

Supper Roster: Mesdames Hunt (Captain), Troughton, Grace, Kalucy, &  
Thompson.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. D. Sinclair,  
President.

Phone 587.4555

Mrs. B. Perkins,  
Publicity Officer.  
Phone 587.9164

Mrs. E. Eardley,  
Secretary.  
Phone 59.8078.

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

Mr. A. Ellis,  
Research Officer.  
Phone 587.1159

## The Clock of Life.

The clock of life is wound but once, and no one has the power  
To tell just when the hands will stop, At late or early hour.  
Now is the only time you own, Live, Love, Toil with a Will,  
Place no faith in tomorrow, The clock may then be still. (Anonymous)

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 4. "The Arncliffe to Bexley Steam Tramway" - 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.

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

OCTOBER WEEKEND. 1ST, 2ND & 3RD OCTOBER. - Trip to Canberra and Braidwood. - Cost \$60 Dinner, Bed and Breakfast (Waiting list only). Deposit \$10 at May meeting please.

NORFOLK ISLAND TRIP - JUNE 6TH - 15TH.

All arrangements have been made. 33 members and friends leaving by East-West Airlines.

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### NOTE TO MEMBERS.

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

## ART AND THE ABORIGINE.

- "Karliboodi"  
- *Outdoors & Fishing*  
- October 1948 p98-99.

The Australian Aborigine has an excellent sense of draughtmanship and colour perception which he expresses in his designs and paintings on rock faces and sheets of bark. Usually he works with four colours - red, yellow ochres, white (pipe-clay) and black (charcoal). These are ground to a powder and mixed to a thin paste with water or saliva. The brushes consist of frayed sticks or bark, while a feather, or several strands of human hair, is used for the finer work.

Walls of caves or overhanging ledges of rock are decorated with human and local animal forms; while sometimes an aborigine, who has been on a long walkabout, draws his impressions of animals he has seen in far distant localities.

It is not unusual to find a blackfellow's interpretation of a stockboy breaking a rearing horse, or roping a steer, drawn on a rockface or wall of a deserted building. Along the coast of Arnhem Land, Charles Barrett even found cave paintings representing Japanese pearling crews with their luggers.

Bark is only painted during times of the year when it is pliable and easily removed from the trees. It is held flat with stones and dried before it is ready to receive the colours.

Certain tribes have a particular range of designs that no member of another tribe would dare to copy.

Although most paintings arise from an aborigine's desire to express himself for his own amusement, many paintings or series of paintings have sacred or mythological significance. In these the blackfellow's method of expressing himself is seen at its best.

Throughout Australia, despite the different interpretations of various phases of life in legends, most tribes agree that the Rainbow Snake, or some other great mythological snake, was the beginning of life. The interpretations of these legendary forms are not necessarily tribal, but individual.

In Central areas, I have seen the Rainbow snake drawn on similar lines to a brontosaurus with bulky body, long neck and thick legs. In the Katherine (N.T.) area, the Rainbow snake is occasionally drawn with horns, while along the Roper River I have seen the Rainbow snake looking for all the world like a Chinese Dragon. The head was dragon-like with its tongue a flash of forked lightning; feathers protruded from its neck and the tail was broad like a fish's.

When the artist wishes to denote the sex of his characters he has no inhibition about drawing the sexual organs, whether human or animal.

If an animal's sex is not apparent but still important, snakes for example, he may draw eggs within the body.

This brings us to another interesting form his art may take - X-ray Drawings.

Even those who endeavour to convince themselves that our aborigine is a low, ignorant animal, cannot fail to be amazed at his knowledge of anatomy. This knowledge is often expressed in X-ray drawings. The animal is outlined, the vertebrae and various other skeleton-structure filled in, also heart, lungs, liver, etc., and quite often muscular arrangements.

The aborigine does not paint objects as they are seen by us all. If he sees a white cockatoo with a sweeping yellow crest, he does not necessarily paint a white-feathered bird with a crest. He paints his own individual interpretation of what he has seen, not as he thinks others have seen. This is something modern artists strive for today, yet it was attained by our aborigines hundreds of years ago.

If the artist wishes to draw a white cockatoo with spots, circles or bands, he does so; if he interprets the bird as an object of food he may paint it without feathers, marked off at the various points of dismemberment.

Some artists are masters of design, especially the Melville Islanders. The designs are used to decorate ceremonial objects, bark bags and spears. Although the designs balance, they are not symmetrical, simply because the blackfellow is a child of Nature and paints from Nature. Nature's designs are not symmetrical. The veins of a leaf are fewer on one side than the other; the spots on a goanna's limbs are less numerous on one side than the other; the markings on a carpet snake vary on each side.

Our blackfellow is an enthusiastic artist. When rock painting begins to fade, he retraces them from time to time and fills in all the available space on the rockface until quite often fresh paintings superimpose old ones. If suitable bark is unavailable, he may scrounge pieces of board, cardboard, iron or fibro cement. I collected a number of these paintings along the Roper River for Melbourne Ward's Gallery of Natural History and Aboriginal Art at Medlow Baths. The artist fills in all the available space on his material, and if it is necessary to bend or twist an animal to fit on his "canvas" he does so.

In one instance a painting of a tortoise on the side of a butterbox was brought to me. I was disappointed that the tortoise was minus its head, only to find the head on the other side.

Literally hundreds of well preserved works of aborigine art line our foreshores and inland regions.

Even civilisation has not detracted from this age-old native pursuit. To the aborigine, this practice is as purposeful as his tribal ceremonies; it records his impressions of local fish, animals and birds. In short,

it becomes his diary for quick reference in the years to come.

A primitive means of expression, the art of the aborigine possesses a significance far beyond its simple visual effect.

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FORTY YEARS LATER - fascinating...

- Extracts supplied by  
Mrs E Eardley.

- March 1977.

Extracts from "Hurstville Propeller - 1937".

25.3.37 Rockdale Relief Works - to be discontinued.

New Trolley'Bus Service - Delay in Road Construction -  
Clareville Avenue, Doll's Point.

Progress of Rockdale over 60 years -

1880 the mileage of construction of roads was 22 miles -  
increase 1900 to 65 miles, 1925 to 88 miles and 1936 to  
133 miles...

Council's valuation 1880 - unimproved Capital Value  
pounds 100,395.0.0. 1900 - pounds 2,588,190.0.0.

Rate Levy 1880 - 1/- in pound. Gross revenue 1871 -  
pounds 205.0.0. - 1900 - pounds 5,187.0.0 -  
1914 - pounds 21,448.0.0 - 1935 - pounds 157,000.0.0.

22.4.37 Rockdale & Coronation Year - Ten thousand gilt medals.  
Mayor of Rockdale, Mr F.W.Beehag stated of presentation  
to local schools on 5.5.37 Empire Day to celebrate the  
coronation of King George VI and Queen Elizabeth.

20.5.37 Seats for Rockdale pedestrians - seats costing 27/6 made  
of concrete to be installed in parks, reserves etc.

3.6.37 Flats at Rockdale - Application received for erection of  
flats - cnr. Bay and Cameron Streets, Rockdale.

8.7.37 Kogarah's Old Steam Tram - superseded by modern Trolley Buses.

15.7.37 Sunday Sport at Rockdale - Picnic matches allowed. Carried  
6 votes to 4.

29.7.37 Rockdale and its Bands. Aldermanic criticism - "The display  
given by the Rockdale Municipal Band on the opening day of  
the new trolley bus service was disgraceful" said Ald.McGuire.  
Only 12 members attended and half of them did not have  
uniforms. He considered such a display in front of leading  
Government visitors was a bad advertisement for Rockdale...

New Trolley Bus Service. Complaints at Rockdale. Ald.Napper  
heard of people missing trains due to trolley buses not  
running to time. It was said that as drivers became more  
experienced in handling the buses, complaints would cease.

12.8.37 Cows and Dairies -

A petition received from residents of French Street objecting to the conditions of cow paddocks and cows having access to stagnant drainage water also objection to breeding cattle on the property. It was asked that the owner be compelled to erect a 6' fence around his land. Ald. Napper stated that it was about time dairies were either placed outside the metropolitan area or so placed not to cause nuisances to residents.

7.10.37 Loud Speakers for Election - banned by Rockdale Council.

28.10.37 Rockdale's Sign - the old "Rockdale" electric sign outside Rockdale Town Hall to be dismantled - a new Neon sign installed at the intersection of Bay Street, Rockdale.

18.11.37 New Illuminated Clock - Permission granted for erection of an illuminated bulletin board and clock tower on land in Princes Highway, near Muddy Creek.

21.12.37 Veteran Alderman Retires - Ald. L.L.Earl's activities over, after 13 years as Alderman.

23.12.37 Rockdale's Old Smithy- Demolition orders were given by Council for the old Blacksmith's shop which stood next to the Royal Hotel, Rockdale for nearly half a century. The structure of timber and galvanised iron.

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Extracts from "Hurstville Propeller - 1938"

27.1.38 Cook's River "Should be a Picture" - Rockdale Council granted co-operation to Marrickville Council calling conference to urge the cleaning of Cook's River be extended from Canterbury Bridge to Tempe Dam. Mascot Council urging Government to dedicate foreshores of this river as a public reserve. "If this river was on the continent, it would be a pretty picture as a live-wire centre.", said Ald. Guess. He said that this would be an advantage to Rockdale and surrounding districts.

Shark-Proof Baths - for Ramsgate Surfers..

Rockdale Council piles to be driven at Ramsgate Beach to hold a shark-proof net to enclose swimming area. Cost pounds 40.0.0 to send a pile-driving plant to Ramsgate. Only cost pounds 10.0.0 for 2 piles.

Rockdale and its Floods - serious winter floods occur in Bay Street, near Tram Depot.



- 10.2.38 Infantile Paralysis - Four cases in Rockdale reported by Health Inspector - Mr J V Tyrrell.

Cook Park Camps - No chance for more shacks. "When we receive notice of another shack going up on Cook Park, we take down a gang of men on a lorry and immediately pull it down.", stated Rockdale's Inspector - Mr J V Tyrrell.

- 19.5.38 Cows in Sports Park - Rockdale Council's proposal. Permission was granted by Rockdale Council to local dairymen to graze 40 cows at Bestic Street, end of Barton Park at a rental of pounds 1.10.0 per week, fencing to cost pounds 75.0.0.

Ald. Guess had hoped that the park would have presented a resemblance of an English Forest with all its trees.

- 6.10.38 Dairies in Rockdale. Interference opposed. "Our dairies are a credit and asset to the Municipality and we should oppose any more for their removal" said Ald. Chambers.

- 8.12.38. Mayoral Election - 4th successive time elected as Mayor for Ald. F W Beehag for Rockdale. Pounds 208.0.0. allowance for year.

- 29.12.38 Veteran Town Hall - Rockdale Building's 50th Birthday Anniversary - 11.12.1888. First erected in St. George area.

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Extracts from "Hurstville Propeller - 1942".

- 15.1.42 Aluminium Scrap - Collection for defence needs.

- 19.2.42 Japanese Names Despised - Rockdale Council takes action. Altering Street names. On the motion of Ald. Mollershead the Council decided to direct the Town Clerk to compile a list of all streets with names other than British or of the Allies, for their consideration. The matter of Togo Street was deferred.

- 19.3.42 Fire at Town Hall - At the conclusion of the Play "Roberta" by the Rockdale Musical Society at Rockdale Town Hall, a fire broke out among the theatrical properties on the stage.

- 9.4.42 Camouflage Net Making - Rockdale's splendid effort.

- 14.5.42 Rockdale's Town Clerk - wishes to join the R.A.A.F - Mr J.R.Scott.

Rockdale's Memorial Gun - to be taken away as salvage. Positioned outside Rockdale School of Arts.



- 6.8.42 Welcome to U.S.A.Forces - Mayor of Rockdale extended a welcome to representatives of the U.S.A.Forces at the Town Hall.
- 3.9.42 Novel Gift to Mayor... Anonymous Ratepayer's Tribute. Rockdale Council Meeting was brightened with a touch of humour and an act distinctly different from its usual business when a large megaphone, patriotically painted in red, white and blue, was presented to the Mayor, Ald. Jones, re his connections with Rockdale Patriotic Funds' work for local soldiers.
- 30.9.42. The Late Duke of Kent. Tribute by Rockdale Council-adjourned for 15 minutes as an expression of loyalty and sorrow.
- 31.12.42 Rockdale Municipal Rates - increased by 6d. in the pound.
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LYDHAM HALL LOCAL COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR  
ENDED 28TH FEBRUARY, 1977.

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Whilst it is not possible to again report the same frenetic activity that has marked the restoration of Lydham Hall over the last two years, the year just completed has, nevertheless, been one of considerable progress.

An inspection of the premises at the end of last year by the Secretary of the National Trust resulted in the loan on the furniture from the Estate of the late Miss Mabel Holbeach being extended for a further three years. The organ donated by the Presbyterian Church which was too large to be used, was sold and the proceeds returned to the church. The gallery windows which were so worn and rotted that they were in danger of falling out were replaced by the Council and a final plan was agreed to for extensions to the caretaker's quarters and the removal of the fibroed-in section of the back verandah.

During the year a promotion pamphlet was prepared and circulated to all schools and organisations in the St. George District and Sutherland Shire. These resulted in a marked increase in the number of group visits.

Publicity was also prepared for each of the Metropolitan Daily Newspapers, the Women's Weekly, Woman's Day and the N.R.M.A. Touring Guide but to date only the N.R.M.A. has shown any response.

Restoration activity has been limited to the upstairs museum where several showcases were installed and exhibits re-arranged. The new arrangement has been favourably commented upon and with Mr. Sinclair's assistance most items are now labelled and their donors acknowledged.

At present the second section of the museum is being re-arranged but more showcases are urgently needed not only to protect items from theft and damage but also so that they can be properly displayed. It is most important that this museum, which contains so many interesting and valuable items, should complement the very fine display on the lower floor and not be in marked contrast to it.

Although the attendance figures for 1976-77 were slightly below the record 2,595 admitted last year (due entirely to the prolonged petrol shortage of October-November-December and the cancellation of four group inspections because of the unavoidable absence of the Curator in February) all visitors to Lydham Hall during the period under review were most enthusiastic in their praise of the manner in which the house has been restored particularly the steady stream of visitors from interstate and overseas.

Special mention must be made in this report of the care with which the curator, Miss Bet Otton, keeps the property and the business-like manner in which she manages the inspections as well as the small but intensely loyal band of men and women who each weekend make themselves available to conduct visitors through the home.

Once again the Committee wishes to place on record its thanks to the large number of people who have donated items of interest during the year. These have already been acknowledged month by month in the Historical Society Bulletin.

Finally we would like to thank Alderman Arthur Ford for maintaining the grounds and Council's Superintendent of Properties, Mr. Daly, for his ready assistance with internal and external maintenance.

The preservation and restoration of Lydham Hall, despite its early difficulties, is a project of which the Council and the Historical Society can now be justly proud.

Alderman R.W. Rathbone  
Hon. Secretary,  
Lydham Hall Local Committee  
5. 3. 77.