



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

1/46 Oatley Ave.,
OATLEY. 2223.

September 1977.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, September 16th, 1977, at 8 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: The History of Gilbert & Sullivan, to be presented by
Mr. Don Sinclair.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Gow, Captain, Mrs. O'Shea, Mrs. Longhurst, Mrs. Samuelson.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President,
Phone 587.1159.

Miss A. Lang,
Secretary.
Phone 57.2608.

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.

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

Phone 587 9164

Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer.
Phone 587.1159

"The Horse would have a good laugh today if he could see all the motorists adjusting their shoulder harnesses."

F.F.W. (Readers Digest)

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.

It is with regret that we mention the passing of Miss M. Cheetham and Mrs. Marsden, both of whom will be sadly missed from our meetings.

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" - very limited stocks.

Book 4. "The Arncliffe to Bexley Steam Tramway" - very limited stocks.

Also available: (By the same Author)

Book 7. "The Early History/Tempe & The Black Creek Valley"

Contact Asst. Secretary 'Phone 59.8078.

OR Miss Otton 'Phone 59.4259 (after 8 p.m.)

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

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.

NOTE TO MEMBERS. Please advise Secretary ('phone 57.2608 - after 6 p.m.) of any change of address - this will save disappointment when your Bulletin is posted to you.

SOCIAL. October 1st, 2nd & 3rd ... October Long Weekend.

Saturday - Bus leaves Rockdale Town Hall at 7.30 a.m. sharp.
Ferry trip on Lake Burley Griffin.

Sunday - Braidwood & Majors Creek.
Return Monday via Batemans Bay & South Coast.
Cost: Dinner, Bed & Breakfast - \$60.00.
Ferry Trip \$2.50 extra. (will take 90 minutes).

Ring Mrs. Wright - 599.4884, for details.
Balance of money at September meeting please.

An outing has been arranged for November 26th to the Lane Cove National Park, including "a River Trip" on the "Paddle Wheeler", lunch will be in the National Park following the River Trip (bring your own eats etc.). The return journey will be made via the Northern Beaches.

Time: 9.00 a.m. sharp.

Meeting Place: Rockdale Town Hall.

Cost: \$2.75 per person.

Date: 26th November, 1977.

Also

An Inspection of Victoria Barracks and the "Changing of the Guard", followed by an Inspection of Elizabeth Bay House, with lunch at Watsons Bay. (Bring your own eats).

Time. 9.00 a.m. Sharp.

Meeting Place: Rockdale Town Hall.

Cost \$2.50 per person.

Date: Tuesday, October 18th, 1977.

DONATIONS TO LYDHAM HALL.

Mrs. McCloure, Hurstville.	1 Iron Collection of Old Books.
Mrs. M. Lanxon, Allawah.	Very Small Holy Bible.
Mrs. Lee, Allawah.	1 Lace Collar.
Misses Stacey, Bexley.	3 Books. 1873, 1875 and 1877. Collection of Certificates. 1 Blue & White Plate.
Mrs. Grey, Bexley.	1 Blue & White Saucer.
Mr. R. Dunsmore,	Sketch of Bexley Ladies College, & History 1895.
Mr. Kennedy, Bexley.	Nail, made by Convicts 1840. Picked up at Victoria Barracks, Paddington.
Mrs. McCloure, Hurstville.	1 Small Meat Dish, over 100 years old 1 Iron Stand 1 Shaving Strop 1 Book.
Dunsmore Family.	Music Box, over 90 years old 4 Song Books " " " " Ink Stand

Donations to Lydham Hall (continued).

Mrs. Foster, Kogarah.	Petrol Ration Tickets (2nd World War)
Mr. & Mrs. Day, Bexley.	Rockdale Coat of Arms. Mounted Engraved Emu's Egg
Mrs. Knappett, Carlton.	Black Lace Frock, 1920. Black Silk & Lace Cap, black beaded, 1920. 1 Holy Bible 2 Shells 1 Granite Ornament 1 Cork Picture Silver Money Purse Metal Belt with Buckle.
Mr. & Mrs. Bereyne, Bexley.	Collection of Hand Made Nails, 1827. White Cotton Hand-knitted Cover, 150 years old.

THE ROYAL - A CITY PARK -

ROYAL NATIONAL PARK - It's a part of Sydney that fits
like an old shoe.

- Joseph Glascott
Environment Writer

- Sydney Morning Herald
- 21st May 1977.

"Well worn, but worn well." The bush nun in the southern Riverina who sought to teach us manners and grooming along with writing and arithmetic left the phrase indelibly implanted from a spontaneous letter about the care of shoes. It came to mind when I revisited Royal National Park recently after an absence of many years.

The "Royal" has been part of Sydney for so long that it fits comfortably like an old shoe. It takes a battering but it comes up shining with the gleam of well-used leather.

Royal National Park, south of Sutherland, is the second oldest national park in the world. Indeed, it claims to be the first to use the description, "national". With no desire to create an international incident, we acknowledge that the US established the first park of the national type. This was Yellowstone in north-west Wyoming, dedicated in 1872.

The preservation of the National Park, Sydney, followed soon afterwards in 1879 (The Royal nomenclature was added after Queen Elizabeth visited the park in 1954).

N.S.W. can be proud that it was a world leader with America in the development of national parks. The year after next the Royal will celebrate its centenary. This will be marked by a conference in Sydney of international park authorities.

The Royal can teach the authorities from overseas a great deal about park management. In its near century of use it has followed the growth of the world national park movement, seen great changes in the objectives of national parks and witnessed the development of new attitudes towards conservation of natural areas.

It is remarkable that the Royal has lasted through the experience as well as it has. But it was not achieved without a legacy of problems peculiar to the Royal.

Apart from its long history, the Royal is quite different to other parks throughout the State. It is a city park. The Royal begins on the southern boundary of the Sydney metropolitan area with its population of almost three million and stretches to the northern boundaries of the Wollongong-Port Kembla industrial city with its population of more than 250,000.

As a result, the Royal is, in every sense, a heavily used park. It has to cope with pressures of people and motor traffic unknown to other remote parks. From the dedication of its first 9,000 hectares on April 26, 1879, the Royal was presented with challenges not associated with later national parks.

Sir John Robertson, while Acting Premier early in that year, conceived the idea of bequeathing to the people of the State *"a national domain for rest and recreation."*

Later in the year, the Minister for Lands in the Parkes-Robertson Government brought down a deed of grant which read:

"And we do hereby empower the trustees of the National Park to set aside and use such portions of the said park for the purpose following; first, ornamental plantations, lawns and gardens, second, zoological gardens, third, racecourses, fourth, cricket, or any other lawful game, fifth, rifle butt or artillery range, sixth, exercise or encampment of military or naval forces, seventh, bathing places, eighth, for any public amusement or purpose which the Governor may declare from time to time an amusement or purpose for which the park may be used."

The trustees were also empowered to grant licences for the mining of coal, lime, stone, clay, gravel and other minerals (excepting gold or silver) in the park and to permit the construction of pits, road, tramways, railroads and engine houses as they considered expedient.

It was a far cry from today's concept of national parks as preserved areas of natural beauty. (Although sandminers are still permitted to rip up the beaches of our coastal parks.)

But they were quite acceptable objectives for a national park in the later part of the last century. Pictures of crinoline-gowned ladies at the turn of the century feeding swans in the Hacking River or being rowed along its reaches by their dark-suited beaus show that it was well appreciated by the people of Sydney. Little concern was shown by authorities in the early days for the ecology system of the park.

Sawmillers were permitted to log the magnificent stands of cedar in the park to such effect that only a few examples of the trees remain. A couple along Lady Carrington Drive stand out in autumn with their red-tinted leaves. Reports of devastation of the park forests published in the Herald in the early 1920s forced the Government to stop the timber logging.

In 1885 about 80 hectares on the shores of the Hacking River downstream from Audley were cleared and a deer park established. The trustees obtained seven fallow deer from Parramatta Park as well as a number of white angora goats. They added red deer to the herd later. By 1937, the deer herd in the park was estimated at 600. The goats also had multiplied into hundreds.

As late as 1954, a newspaper reported that *"hundreds of deer are invading the small town of Bundeena in National Park. The deer fighting and roaring in the streets at night disturbs the town-people's rest. They jump fences, wreck vegetable and flower gardens and tear branches off fruit trees."*

But worse damage was caused to the park by the deer and goats uprooting and trampling the native vegetation. Eventually the herds had to be reduced. Shooters almost wiped out the goats, but many deer remain. Herds of 30 to 40 can often be seen in open country. A herd was grazing on the coastal pasture below Governor Game lookout last week.

Domestic dogs and feral cats are the scourge of marsupials and birds in the park. The Royal is a convenient place for people to dump unwanted pets. Dogs often end up starving to death unless they find their way out of the park, but the cats survive and turn into wild, forest predators of fauna.

The beginnings of Bundeena village across Port Hacking from Cronulla were already in the park as the Yarmouth freehold estate when the park was established. It is now a separate enclave within the park. But in the early 1900s, untidy illegal shacks began to proliferate along the river frontages. The building of shacks continued along the coastal beaches especially during the 1930 depression years.

Successive governments have granted the occupants permissive occupancy. There are now 262 permissive occupants of shacks in the park. Under the Government's latest directive, the shacks may stand only for the life of the present occupants and cannot be passed on to descendants. But the shanty towns of these fortunate few disfigure some of the most magnificent beach headlands in the park. A typical shack town can be seen around South Era Beach from Governor Game Lookout.

A living standards increased the shack dwellers erected a cliff-face pulley device to haul refrigerators, television sets and other modern household equipment down to the beach front. The National Parks and Wildlife Service ordered its demolition. The squatters now must backpack their supplies and equipment over walking trails.

The Royal's biggest problem comes from the large numbers of people who use the park - more than one million a year. The Royal is a mecca for city campers. Last year 30,000 camping permits were issued. *"Our unhappy fate being close to the city is to be the trial ground for new campers,"* the Park Superintendent, Mr Colin Green, said. *"They try out on us before going further afield knowing that they can pack up and go home if things get uncomfortable."*

Many of these campers are ignorant or heedless of nature conservation. They cut down native trees and vegetation for firewood and leave piles of rubbish in their wake. Rubbish collection is almost a full-time occupation for the park rangers. At regular intervals, a helicopter is brought in to haul out crates of rubbish left behind by campers and shack dwellers in remote areas.

Any weekend will see up to 50,000 people using Royal National Park. To make the crush worse, most of them congregate in the central Audley riverbank area or at Garie and Wattamolla beaches, served by roads.

But nothing compares with Christmas Day. The Macedonian Greek community of Sydney have made the Audley picnic grounds their mass reunion site at Christmas. Family groups begin arriving early in the morning and by midday the riverbank is packed. As the afternoon wears on, dancing groups of up to 200 men draw even more people to watch.

Last Christmas, traffic police were called in to help sort out the congestion. Lady Carrington Drive was blocked for three hours and the short trip from the park gates to Audley took half an hour.

At Easter, migrant families barbecue whole sheep in the park picnic grounds for community festivals. *"I've even seen sheep being slaughtered and skinned in the park before the feast,"* a ranger said. *"We just don't provide for that sort of thing."*

In spite of these heavy pressures, Royal National Park manages to survive. Many changes and improvements have been made since the National Parks and Wildlife Service took over control of the park from the former trust in 1967.

Bare, eroded riverbanks in the Audley picnic-boating area have been freed from motor traffic and regenerated with grasses and a program of repairs to walking trails in the park has been undertaken. Large barren areas where the trust had permitted travel excavation are being regenerated with native plants.

Most significantly, park management emphasis has been turned towards use of the park for passive enjoyment of its natural features - its forest, heath-lands and coastal cliffs and beaches - rather than as a public recreation area. The run-down Allambie guesthouse at Audley was demolished and the nearby tennis courts and putting greens turned into picnic areas.

Lady Carrington Drive, which was completed in 1886, is the best forest drive in the Sydney region. It runs for about 13 km along the banks of the Hacking River from south of Waterfall to Audley. The narrow dirt road winds through forests of enormous turpentine and black-butt trees with girths of over four and five metres. Dense rainforests of creepers and vines abut the drive. They should be walked into, not just driven past.

Lyre birds, bower birds, wombats, possum, wallaby and scores of birdlife species inhabit the rainforests and the heathlands. The open woodlands and heathlands in particular, are the habitat of an infinite variety of native wildflowers and plantlife. The delicate beauty of their colourful flowers are best seen in August-September.

Along the rocky river gorges you will find many magnificently gnarled Sydney red gums (*angophora costata*) trees displaying their sensuous pink trunks on the skyline. *"They are my favourites"*, said ranger, Harold Senior. *"I regard them as my old friends, I often stop to pat one and feel the smoothness of its bark."*

The walking trails provide the best means for active visitors to see the park away from the busy roadways and picnic grounds. The Garrawarra coastal track from Otford Lookout in the south runs along the coast past the Figure Eight natural rock swimming pool to the beautiful, secluded Burning Palms Beach and can be followed on to Garie Beach in the north. These are not easy strolls, but involve walks of three to four hours.

The Ulola tracks run through the western section of the park between Audley and Waterfall. Another coastal track runs from Bundeena to Wattamolla Beach. The walker is rewarded with coastal and bushland scenery, wildlife and sites of Aboriginal middens and carvings that he never dreamed existed within a few miles of his Sydney suburban home.

If you happen to run into ranger Harold Senior he can tell you more about the park in five minutes that you could discover for yourself in a month. Mr Senior has worked as a ranger in Royal National Park for 35 years. He has remained from the era of horseback patrol to rounds in a four-wheel drive vehicle.

He might show you Gibraltar Rock from which the Australian sportsman Snowy Baker dived into the Hacking River for a scene with Helen Twelvetrees in the early Australian film, "Uncivilised".

He will probably point out the rock pool beside Artillery Road leading out of Audley where soldiers camped in the park during World War II stopped on route marches to refresh themselves. *"Many a poor devil probably died in the deserts of the Middle East thinking about the cold water of this rock pool,"* he said.

Mr Senior has seen the Royal through all its hectic days; from the mining of its rods in the 1940s against possible coastal invasion to controlling all-night parties by gangs of bikies into the 1960s.

The Royal has lasted through the fashions of nearly 100 years and today is looking better than ever. Only Yellowstone can compare in length of history with the Royal. But only the Royal National Park provides a city of three million with a natural scenic wonderland on its doorstep.
