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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

1/46 Oatley Ave.
OATLEY. 2223.
October 1977.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, October 21st, 1977, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Pictorial Scenes & Historical Buildings of Great Britain & Europe, with background music. Photography by Jeff Scholer, commentary by Peter Sage.

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

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President.
Phone 587.1159

Miss A. Lang,
Secretary.
Phone 57.2608.

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.

A small coin in a large jar makes a big noise.

..... The Talmud.

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:

Books numbered 1 to 6 should soon be available again at a reasonable price.

Also available (by the same Author)

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

Contact Asst. Secretary 'Phone 59.8078.

OR Miss Otten '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.

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.).

Time: 9.00 a.m. sharp.

Meeting Place: Rockdale Town Hall.

Cost: \$2.75 per person.

Date: 26th November, 1977.

Ring Mrs. Wright - 599.4884, for details of social activities.

Special Notice. November Meeting will be Friday, November 25th - usual time and place.

BOTANY BAY - Past and Present.

- *Francis Myers.*

- *Published - John Woods & Co. Ltd.
Steam Machine Printers
13 Bridge St, Sydney.
- 1885 -*

The following excerpts are taken from this fascinating document. An interesting study in comparisons then & now. (1977).

Botany Bay has conveyed more and more misapprehensions to ordinary minds perhaps than any other name or term in the language. To English speaking people it has been synonymous with all the curse of the elder days of the colony. To Botany Bay, was to the very inferno of convictism. Strange that convictism just planted its foot upon the shores of the bay and departed for ever.

But the taint of convictism being removed, and the first life of the colony starting from another point, Botany Bay fell into a contempt scarcely less fatal to its full and fair development. People of Australia said, "It's a no man's land, a place where no wise man would dwell." People of the old world, "It is a cursed place, to be ignored by all who would find and know the true Australia." The following pages are written with intent to introduce the true Botany to those who hitherto have only been instructed by tradition.

.... they were shy of the good Captain when he came into the broad, bright bay on that day late on in the April of 1770.

.. there was the same blue depths, green shallows, and silver sands, backed by the tall or bowery trees; there by Woniora, the broad estuary of George's River; there beneath the rocky headland the placid Bay; there the two bold headlands north & south, & at low water the broad flats with their tens of millions of oysters, cockles and crabs. Good Captain Cook was not disappointed with it. He learned far more from his first glance than the majority of the people of this colony know to-day.

But Captain Cook went away - sailed away in the good ship 'Endeavour' (you could have slung her on the davits of an Orient liner) but took with him strange freight & strange seed to take root & in season bring forth marvellous fruit. Mr., after Sir Joseph Banks & Dr Solander were with Captain Cook on that trip, & they were amazed, as any creatures of ordinary intelligence must needs have been amazed, at the wealth of floral beauty all around. They had pulled up George's River; they had roamed upon all the hills; they had gathered heath & heather & fringed violets & bottlebrush & flannel flowers & lily-pillies. Remember, it was in the end of April, a very fair month for wild flowers, & they wandered amongst bush which had remained unexplored through all the centuries. Botany Bay they called the place. But they went away, sailing - sailing again in the little 'endeavour', though not before they had given three cheers, & fired three rounds, & hoisted the King's colours, & proclaimed the authority of Mother England over all the wild land.

Next to come was "The First Fleet" - His Majesty's ships 'Sirius' and 'Supply', with three victuallers & six transports. They did not enter altogether, they had been beaten much about the ocean. In eight months they had sailed round by Teneriffe to Rio, thence to the Cape, & had parted company in the blustering southerlies, so that the 'Supply' with a detachment came in first on the 18th January, the 'Sirius' two days later. They did not, however, like the bay. A boat went out exploring & on the 23rd of that same January, returned with a cheer for the newly-discovered harbour of Port Jackson. Yes, Botany Bay overflowed into Port Jackson even in these early days, just as poor, overcrowded Port Jackson begins to overflow into big, broad, bright, beautiful Botany now.

.... I sprang upon the barricade & plainly descried two ships of considerable size standing in for the mouth of the bay.... the cause of the alarm pronounced to be two French ships which it was now recollected were on a voyage of discovery in the Southern Hemisphere. In the course of the day, the officer returned and brought intelligence that the ships were the 'Boussole' & 'Astrolabe', sent out by order of the king of France & under the command of Monsieur La Perouse.

What a gateway it has been, that old gap between the two heads. England and France both entered there to the new world.

And now, perhaps, it may be as well to answer the question - what is meant by Botany? What country is taken in by the description? And the answer is easy. All the watershed of Botany Bay lying fairly within the suburban areas of Sydney. All to the south of that stunted backbone ridge of the city & its suburbs which, starting at Ben Buckler, fairly divides the waters, sending this to Port Jackson with its various affluents, that to the bay with its unknown rivers. La Perouse is ours, & backward on the coast line to Long Bay & we take in all the Bunnerong Flats, the meadows of Captain Cook, but the great park of the city in the future; & we have Sir Joseph Banks, with its gardens & bowers, & Sandringham with its glorious beach, & Sans Souci, & Woniore & the George's River as far inland as we please, & all the southern shores & beaches down to Kurnell, where is the first mark of the white man's foot.

Very slowly indeed did that work of establishing homes begin, & very little result had it for many years. A few fishermen went down & settled about the beaches, & made great hauls at times, & carried them with difficulty over the swampy road to Sydney; & a Mr John Connell, grandfather of that Mr Elias Laycock, whose fame as a sculler is well known, settled down upon some height south from Kurnell, known now as the old farm, & with the help of the Government men began to clear & cultivate. Mr George Bedford also dug a well, & expressed his willingness to build houses for any who might be disposed to settle in so pleasant a district; & very shortly after these pioneers came, Mr Laycock Snr., father of the sculler, & Mr G Simpson, father of the present proprietor of the romantically situated & well provided accommodation house on the Hacking waters.

Mr Laycock, when anxious to get to town, would not take the long road round about by George's River, but getting into his boat tied the horse astern, & forced that good brute to swim while he pulled over to La Perouse; thence he would ride round by Long Bay & across the swamps to Randwick & make back by the same route on his return.

The Routes -

The road to Botany Bay is no more by the old Government tram than by the ocean route via Teneriffe, Rio & the Cape, which Cptn. Phillips took. You may get to Botany that way, coasting round by the slums of the city & driving along through the busy, dusty flats of Waterloo, but it is not fair to Botany so to approach. If you desire to reach that end of the bay, & to see it at its best, drive out by way of Randwick down that bowery avenue of a road between the Cricket & the Football Reserves; turn off before you come to the Racecourse & bowl along through the flowering scrub of the Water Reserve & the Cooper Estate, & come on to those splendid meadow flats by the tram terminus below the village proper.

Probably, the tram will always be the people's way of reaching that end of the Bay, but, if so, the trams must be better. Why should not trams be clean & cushioned, & free of dust & wet? Why cannot the managers of the trams master the problem which omnibus proprietors solved so long ago & carry their passengers with a moderate degree of cleanliness & comfort? "Don't know", replies the public, & "Don't care," replies the Department.... The tram will surely be better some day; in the interval we must commend its regularity. Excepting on holidays its punctuality is not to be called in question. The tram, as is well known, leaves Bridge Street, & the times of its departure may be learned from the time tables. The tram, with the aid of a few 'buses, does all the work to the northern end of the Bay, but the train has topped the southern end, & by the train the great majority of people now flock down.

Before the train ran there was a very pleasant way to Botany by road, & the pleasant way still remains, despite the thunder & speed of the trains. You may still drive out by the old Parramatta & Newtown Roads, branch off to Cook's River & enter the forest at Arncliffe Heights, which, so far, has not been fatally broken up. And even before reaching Arncliffe, you may obtain a view which will well repay the looking. 'Tis not so fair now as it used to be; works of utility & convenience have broken it up a little. The railway embankment is an ugly line across the picture, & down below there are too many monumental chimneys. They blur, they mar, but they cannot destroy the beauty - the beauty which at morning or eventide a few brief years ago struck all men of artistic mind with delight. Does it seem strange to talk of beauty on Cook's River? for that is the scene of the picture. With full tide there is broad clear water there, a perfect mirror for the sky, the hills & the trees, & very frequently down in the water's depth appears first, the rose of the evening sky, then the black crowns of tress upon the hills, & through the trees - the glamour of evening giving it the grace of centuries - that great mansion, the Warren, which still overlooks all neighbours. The embankment of the railway has barred the river now, & the grace & hope of home have left the mansion, but still the picture is fair, & at eventime, over fast growing trees, & railway roar & ever increasing traffic, comes the Angelus or Ave Maria from the Warren towers - for the Warren is a convent now.

Grey rocks & gums on the road at Arncliffe, bolder rocks & higher trees as Arncliffe is passed, rich forest at Rockdale, high breezy downs at Kogarah from which glimpses of the deep blue Botany waters are frequently obtained, while backward all the city is seen with its smoke shroud, pierced by innumerable spires, & shafts & towers.

And about Kogarah the roads divide for three points of the Bay. Here, towards Sandringham, down through forest & swamp, rich, dense & luxurious, to the broad, well-kept pleasure grounds, the broad white beach, the bathing & fishing & rest & pleasure of the well-known hotel; there to the long point of Sans Souci; & right on to Woniara by one of the most delightful bits of road about the city. Magnificent forest growth is passed on the Woniara Road and for the last mile just the narrowest space of forest, the most perfect fringe of nature divides the land from the water - the broad high road from the blue & pleasant bay.

Pleasant enough are all those roads.....there was no practicable route for them till the railway opened, & at the cost of 1/- it became possible to travel right down to the shores of George's River at the landward gate of the bay. The railway will be the one great route of the future; & looking at that railway, the wonders it has already performed, the blessings it has bestowed upon the city, the opportunities it has afforded to thousands to whom outlet to fresh air & grand scenes of natural beauty was practically denied by prohibitory prices in railway traversed suburbs, the puzzle to stranger as to citizen is - why was it delayed so long?.....

And to aid the railway, in effective as legitimate fashion, the tramways come. The first by a most commendable private enterprise from Rockdale to the magnificent reserve of Lady Robinson's Beach - of which more bye-and-bye. Holiday traffic already taxes the tramway beyond its powers, & very shortly its cars will be filled with travellers who day by day will journey from their city toil to their pleasant suburban homes, for it is a very beautiful country which this tramline explores, terminating at the site of a future city, which has well been named New Brighton.....

And Sans Souci must also have a tram-line in the near future; & Sandringham also; & many & many a forming suburb running to westward of the railway line. These are the legitimate, the proper places for trams, which are monstrous nuisances, if vast conveniences, in the crowded streets of the city. They would be proper feeders to the railway here; direct contributors to the revenue; & whether constructed by private enterprise or paid for by the public funds, good servants of the State, & routes to the New Water.

The New Water -

The term is not ill-advised or hurriedly chosen, for Botany Bay may be fairly named as the least understood, though the first discovered, of all the inland waters of Australia.....

I would be disposed to place the railway bridge as the landward boundary of the Bay, though in old days there would appear to have been other bounds, for on the Woniara bank, a little lower down, are marks which are sometimes supposed to have been set as divisions between Bay & River tribes - handmarks on the rocks, bold impressions of blackfellow's hands...They are graven in the sand-stone rock, clear now as a hundred years ago....All these lines of beauty - capes, plateaux, bays, beaches to the left - are upon the fair territory of Oatley's Grant.

Marvellously lucky man this Oatley must have been in days gone by; ... to

possess such a land tongue as that with deep water all round about, & from the heights an outlook of infinite variety....Yes, that is Como which opens to you now as you round the point stretching inland there, blue & calm as the lake which first bore the name. That is Como, the chief entrance to the great Holt-Sutherland Estate, which in a near future shall have as many villages as thirty years ago it had sheep-folds or cattle-camps.

You may look long & longingly at O'Connel's Bay, & you may find some difficulty in realising that both are corners of the historic & so-called monotonous Botany.....

George's River runs right ahead, winding away for four-and-twenty miles. As you drift along here on the rising tide you have a solitude about you deep as in any Hawkesbury creek;.. yet listening, at times, you may hear the faint whistle of the train at Kogarah or Hurstville, & you know that as the crow flies you are not more than half-a-dozen miles from the centre of the city. Winding here & there in serpentine course goes this River George, the main river of our Cumberland county, carrying the fresh tides inland & meeting far inland, with a shudder of disgust surely, the polluted stream which an important industry of Liverpool supplies.....It is a vile & abominable thing that even 20 miles of progress should be stayed by the unspeakable nuisance caused by the industry, which, to enrich one man & employ a couple of hundred, may pollute & poison a beautiful river.

From this gateway of the bridge, to the left, then southward goes the little fairy river Woronora... All idlers, & lovers, & dreamers, & painters & poets, all rest seekers, all careworn toilers in dusty ways of the city should start with a flowing tide & drift around by the mangrove flat, which marks the opening of the Woronora. Drift leisurely, & look well at the mangroves; they are not common or mean creatures. The strength of the sea is in their luxuriant growth, & the shine of the sea upon all their upper leaves. In form they are perfect; in colour they contrast most happily with the blue of the water & the dark greens, & greys & russets of the shore.

...There is indigo on the hills; there is grey upon the water.... at last unfolded in the deep night through which comes the sound of the lap of waters on inland rocks & beaches, & the distant roar of the waves on the rocks of Kurnell or the long roll of the breakers on Cronulla Beach without the heads.

The New Townships. -

These new townships may be said to begin on the eastern bank of Cook's River. Following the Southern Railway line & the Marrickville tram, the even tide of population pushed out so far before the Illawarra line was begun..... People in search of sites for suburban homes went away to Burwood, to Homebush, to Parramatta or some other locality, - a solid hour's journey from the city.

When Arncliffe began to be advertised there was much puzzlement. "Where & what is Arncliffe?". They were too frequently answered - "Down amongst

the Botany swamps." They did not know - they had not been taught - that the swamps end absolutely with Cook's River. Arncliffe is the first of these new suburbs, certainly not farther from Sydney than Stanmore. A suburb first opened with a few scores of houses dotted about, & acres upon acres of fine building land laying vacant, all within a stone's throw of the train.....

It is not difficult to find the fresh air now, once upon these heights; the smell & the sense of the city is lost; & rising higher & higher we are conscious of larger, fuller inhalations, as drawn from the broader, fairer aspect. For Arncliffe is but at the foot of the rise, which attains a far superior height at Rockdale.... Broad building lands lie George's riverwards from Rockdale, which, so far, have hardly been explored; square miles of country which have already grown grapes & orchard fruit without end; which have through decades been owned by old-fashioned people, living in old-fashioned stone cottages; far from the maddening crowd. And right alongside the line runs similar country to Kogarah & Hurstville; fair hill sides, where any aspect may be chosen, where sea air or landward breeze may be courted, & the rising or the setting sun may be faced.

Kogarah is destined perhaps to become the commercial centre of this district, its railway station standing upon the crown of a rise that overlooks the whole of the Bay.....

Hurstville farther on, has advantages of another sort, a greater retirement, easier access to more secluded waters & a larger area perhaps of country suited to suburban settlement..... But Hurstville seems also to be the site of one of those peculiar & inexplicable errors we occasionally see in the railway construction of the colony. To Hurstville comes the double line of railway from Sydney, but from Hurstville proceeds only the single pair of rails..... Hurstville is not a natural or proper terminus. It differs in this respect from Kogarah as from the township as yet unnamed, as unformed, on the river's bank. Kogarah as the terminus of at least three tram lines, to be shortly constructed, would have been an eminently suitable place for the double line to have made a temporary halt; but once beyond Kogarah, common sense & public necessity seem to agree that no change should be made until the bridge has been reached. Beyond Kogarah lies Peakhurst, and from Peakhurst to George's River a fair succession of rolling downs as land auctioneer or surveyor could have desired.

At the foot of the bridge, the top of that promontory called Oatley's Grant, there should, & some day there will be a station, with the double line of rails running right through its yard. And upon some near height above one of the little shining beaches there will doubtless, on some near day, be one of those many grand hotels which have so long been wated in all Sydney's more attractive suburbs.....

It is absurd to suppose that the double line of railway can halt anywhere short of the water gate which adds to all the charms of ordinary harbour environment those of immediate proximity to still, river water, & public reserves & broad, unoccupied forest lands, whose beauty increases with every southward mile.

The Southern Shores. -

Along all the southern shores of the Bay, to the west of the Woronora River, lies the Holt-Sutherland estate, which, with its two gates of Sylvania & Como invite the people of the metropolis to a marvellous inheritance.

Como is the railway gate to this Estate. Como is situated just at the junction of the Woronora & George's River,... a good deal of the foreshore of this lake has been reserved & a little hill also, from which a fair view is obtained. An hotel offers accommodation & one or two cottages show signs of future homes..... Sutherland will be at least as near to Sydney as Granville - Sutherland, which now we reach by a walk through the bush or along the railway line, where the station-houses are already building & the feters are putting the last touches to the ballast & rails. Sutherland is on the heights of a forest-covered hill, & all the southern woodlands & all the northern land & water views will be unfolded to its future inhabitants.

The Hacking River at the National Park will be five miles to the south & Como will be backward just three miles along the line; but pleasantest walk or ride, or drive, of all to the water's edge, will be down the broad avenue to Sylvania, opposite Woniora.

Public Parks & Pleasure Grounds -

Botany in the course of a very few years will possess the finest park, promenade, boulevard & marine parade in Australia..... Between the Sandringham Road & the Rockdale tram is a broad area of country, covered with a fairly dense forest growth, with clearing here & there marking far-out suburban homes or market gardens. Fairly in the centre of this area is a greener patch of denser growth with signs of water in the centre: that is the site of the future Scarborough Park... Some far-seeing man, however, with a good knowledge of the locality, & a strong belief in its future, saw an especial value in that swamp & thus applied to the Minister for Lands that with some surrounding country it might be dedicated to the public service.....

The beach & a good strip of land adjoining the beach, ought to be reserved in the public interest...."in notifying the park, it is to be called Cook Park, after Mr Samuel Cook, who was the first person to ask for it, & doing so has rendered good service to the colony, & more especially to the people of Sydney & the suburbs.".....

The Sir Joseph Banks Hotel may as fairly be termed the pioneer of rational, natural, legitimate amusement about the bay, ... in many respects this establishment is in advance of any other hotel in the country. It has a garden, just a simple matter surely, but in such a climate as this, what an important matter & how generally neglected! Adjoining the garden are broad spaces of pleasure grounds...covered with the fine, green, native grasses peculiar to the district, or the thick, soft buffalo, shaded by gums.... The main front of the new hotel looks direct upon one of these park-like spaces, while its backward balconies overlook the well-known garden, the broad bay & the Pacific beyond.

Sunday concerts at Botany will, doubtless, seem very small when we have concerts in every public garden on Sunday afternoon & every week-day evening. The business of providing the entertainment proper to Sydney has been carried nearer perfection at this than in any other suburb.....It is no unusual thing to see 400 to 1000 people seated here with a dinner of eight courses before them, & afterwards to find them spread over all the grounds.

The South Head, Kurnell, is also reserved, but not for a park; that is destined to become the home of industry, the scene of all these elaborate manufactures, which in or near a crowded city become noxious trades.

Woniora is also a public pleasure ground, with ample opportunities peculiarly its own. Other pleasure grounds about the bay do not at present call for special notice, though patches here & there & broad tracts yet to be resumed or reserved, will in a near future become beautiful & prominent.

Fish & Fishermen -

Botany Bay was noted for fishing from time immemorial. Captain Cook's men fished... then came the First Fleet..and the Frenchmen who made a sort of miracuouls draught off Kurnell.

A very patient & well-organised & at last successful effort at one style of fishing has been made by Mr Holt in the long half-tidal bays adjacent to Sutherland House. This is in oyster cultivation, a business which, though new to Australia, has long been followed in England & America.

Some Industries of Botany -

Chief perhaps amongst the more elaborate manufactories are the N.S.W. Shale Oil Works, on the Waterloo side of Botany proper, the meat preserving & wool scouring of Messrs. Walsh, Elliott & Rennie & the manufactories of bricks & tiles which are still carried on.

There is a manufacturing work going on across that estuary of Cook's River. The syphon sewer, which is presently to drain all the southern suburbs, is in construction there. Another costly & foolish mistake: the working out of an idea conceived more than ten years ago in utter ignorance of the marvellous suburban expansion which has since taken place. Webb's grant, the Southern head of Cook's River is the place of deposit for this system. Poor old Cook's River, that nature made so beautiful, & man has resolved to so constantly pollute & mar & spoil.

The Future -

A bold hand is necessary in sketching the future of Botany Bay... We cannot think intelligently upon the matter until we get some clear ideas of the possibilities of development of Sydney & all that tremendous extent of country of which Sydney is not the political capital, or the metropolis, but the natural port.
