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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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1/46 Oatley Avenue,
OATLEY. NSW. 2223.
June 1978.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, June 16th, 1978, at 8.00 p.m.
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.
Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Sydney's Water Systems, presented by Mr. Kinnane,
Public Relations Officer, M.W.S. & D. Board.
This address will be most interesting and informative.
We will learn just how it grew to what we accept as our
right today, without question.

Supper Roster: Captain: Miss Callister & Mesdames J. Preddy, W. Farrar,
L. Barrack, and E. Smallwood.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President.
Phone 587.1159.

Miss A. Lang,
Secretary.
Phone 57.2608.

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

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.
Phone 587.9164.

Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer.
Phone 587.1159.

The tongue is the only edged tool which grows sharper with constant use.

Many of our Members have been, and still are, ill. We are sorry to hear this and trust that you will all be well again soon.

SOCIAL.

PORT MACQUARIE. For your pleasure, Mrs. Wright (Social Secretary) has arranged a Coach Trip to Port Macquarie, with a visit to Timber Town at Wauchope, and also to South West Rocks & Trial Bay. This should be most enjoyable.

..... Waiting List Only.

The Details are as follows:

Time: 7.30 a.m. sharp.
Place: Town Hall, Rockdale.
Cost: \$65.00 per person (Inclusive - Dinner, Bed & Breakfast)
Date: Saturday September 30th, October 1st and 2nd.

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 the inspections. Ring Miss Otton, Phone 59.4259, your call will be appreciated.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The St. George Historical Society is pleased to announce that the following books, written and illustrated by the late Gifford H. Eardley, for the Society, have been re-printed and are now available.

Price: \$1.00 per copy (postage extra).

- No. 2 "Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway"
- No. 3 "Saywells Tramway, Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach"
- No. 5 "Our Heritage in Stone"
- No. 6 "All Stations to Como"
- No. 7 "Tempe and The Black Creek Valley" is also available, (limited stocks only).

At a later date, Books No. 1 - "The Wolli Creek Valley", and No. 4 - "Arncliffe to Bexley Steam Tramway", will be re-printed.

For your copy of the above books, please contact one of the following:

Mrs. E. Wright - Phone 599.4884.

Miss A. Lang (Sec.) - Phone 57.2608 (after 6.00 p.m.)

Miss B. Otten - Phone 59.4259 (after 8.00 p.m.)

Mrs. E. Eardley - Phone 59.8078.

There were 27 enrolled at the end of the first week, and after six weeks this had risen to 87. The average attendance increased from 24.5 to 72.7 during the same period. It was given the name of West Botany Public School.

In view of the increase in attendance Mr Bateson applied for the appointment of a pupil teacher, and recommended Miss Jane Hogg of Braidwood for the position. Miss Hogg had passed the pupil teachers' entrance examination some two years previously, but had not yet received an appointment. She had been teaching as an unpaid assistant at Braidwood, but her father having died in April 1880, it had become necessary for her to obtain a paid position. Mr Bateson had been Headmaster at Braidwood prior to his appointment to West Botany, and so knew Miss Hogg's circumstances.

John Salier succeeded Mr Bateson in July 1882, and he immediately complained that the chimneys of the residence smoked *"to an unpleasant degree"*, and that there was neither stove nor grate in either the kitchen or the sitting room. It was decided that a stove should be supplied for the kitchen and a grate for the sitting room, and that the chimneys should be seen to. The work was done by James Poole for 12.15.0.

In August 1883, Harold Norrie wrote to the Department asking if he could buy the old Arncliffe school site, which had been acquired in 1869 but had never been used. Mr Inspector Allpass reported that this site was about 1 1/2 miles from the West Botany school *"in the centre of a locality that will be vastly improved by the Illawarra line of railway"*. He thought it inadvisable to sell the land, but Mr Norrie was informed that it was not for sale.

The name of the school was changed to Arncliffe on 28th September 1885.

Numbers had been steadily increasing since the opening of the school. By the end of 1885 the enrolments had reached 233 and the attendance over 165, and it was decided to erect a second building to provide more accommodation. A tender of pounds 431.0.0. by Thomas Birks for this work was accepted in December 1885, but no further information is available. The building was evidently a wooden one.

While the building work was going on Mr Herlihy, the Headmaster, (described a few years later by Sir. J. H. Carruthers as *"one of the best teachers the Colony has got"*) asked for a corrugated iron wash-house to be added to the residence, pointing out that since the Contractor was already on the spot it would not cost much. But Mr Inspector McIntyre thought the estimated cost of pounds 19.0.0 too much, and, since he thought the residence *"very comfortable"*, and the proposed addition *"unnecessary"*, he refused to recommend it. Mr Herlihy tried again in July 1887. He had found a man who was prepared to do the work for pounds 14.10.0. This time Mr McIntyre reported that the work was *"much needed"* and it was approved, being completed in September.

Rockdale Public School was opened in 1889, and over 100 pupils who had formerly attended at Arncliffe moved to Rockdale, with the result that the Arncliffe enrolment fell from 349 to 223 during the year. Rockdale was actually larger than Arncliffe, and Mr Herlihy was transferred to Rockdale, being succeeded at Arncliffe by Richard Churchill.

An odd situation had arisen in connection with the old site given to the Council of Education by Mr and Mrs Hannam in 1869. It was of one acre, with a frontage to Willington Street (then known as King Street), being on the south side of the street, between the intersections with Loftus Street and Victoria Street (then known as Queen Street). It was about 220 yards from Loftus Street and a little less than 100 yards from Victoria Street. Edward and Alexandra Streets did not then exist. (The present Alexandra Street may run through this site). King Street had been a bush track, largely unfenced; in fact, the school site itself had not been fenced. A few years before this the owner of the land on the north side of the street decided to put up a fence, but his surveyor made a mistake and placed the line of fence about 50' further back than it should have been. By the time the mistake was discovered the fence had been erected, and Mr Reynolds then offered to have the strip of land dedicated as an addition to the street, thus increasing its width from 33' to over 80'. But the owners of the land on the south side of the street promptly advanced their fences by 50', thus reducing the road to its original width of 33' and securing an additional 50' for themselves. By the time their action was discovered so many people were involved that it was decided to accept the situation, in spite of the protests of some local property owners led by William Willington. In consequence, when, about this time, it was decided to fence this site the Department found that all adjoining fences were 50 feet further forward than previously. After discussing the matter with the Lands Titles Office it was decided to put the front fence on the same line as adjoining fences, thus adding a strip of land some 50' wide to the site.

Shortly after the site in King Street was fenced a petition was received in the Department from parents in the locality asking for a school to be established on it, and subsequently a deputation saw the Minister, Mr (later Sir) J H Carruthers. They claimed that many children in the locality were not attending school owing to distance, and that the Hannam family, who had given the site, were aggrieved at its not being used. The Minister replied that, as it was, no children in the district were much more than one mile from a school, and he did not think many could be kept away by distance. (A subsequent survey by the local School Attendance Officer showed that only five children were not attending school, all for health reasons).

"... Children throughout the Colony are complaining of the great distances they have to travel to school; and the Department, with the small funds placed at its disposal for new schools, could not help them. There are about 2,000 schools in the Colony, and of these 1,500 to 1,700 are so isolated as to necessitate children walking very long distances to school. We have a Vote every year in our Public Instruction Department for new schools, and we have exceeded that Vote by about 50% during the last two or three years; and we have had to rely on the forbearance of Parliament that it was necessary to meet the extreme urgency of these cases. I have never before had a case come before me where a school has been asked for within two miles of an existing school. To establish this school would be to seriously diminish the attendance at the other school. Schools are classified according to the attendance, and if the attendance goes down the result is the reduction of the rank of the school and reduction in the teaching staff".

The Minister refused to establish the new school.

There was a dry summer in 1889-1890, and the surface water tanks at the school ran dry although the underground tank still had water in it. It having been pointed out that the water main ran past the school entrance, it was decided to have the water laid on to the school, and this was done early in 1890 at a cost of pounds 15.10.0, by W Furness. Shortly afterwards Mr Alfred Green wrote to the Department saying that he had recently built a villa on land behind the school, and asking if he could have it connected to the school water pipe. Mr Kemp, the Architect, opposed this request on the ground that the pipe was not large enough to supply the house as well as the school, and this if the occupiers of the house failed to pay rates the Municipal Council would probably cut off the supply at the main, thus depriving the school of water owing to causes beyond its control. The request was refused.

Arbor Day was celebrated for the first time at the school on 31st August 1891. Apparently trees were planted, not in the school grounds, but in Arncliffe Park. The ceremony was arranged by Mr J H Clayton, and the Department arranged for the children to be marched to the Park by the teachers so that they could take part in the proceedings.

Mr Frederick Llewelyn, the Secretary of the Executive Committee of *"the proposed Cottage Hospital in the district of St. George"*, wrote to the Department in December 1891 asking for permission to place subscription boxes for the Hospital in Arncliffe, Rockdale and Kogarah Public Schools. The Chief Inspector, Mr Maynard, commented:

"... As this hospital is non-sectarian, and is for a good object, I see no objection to the proposal,

on the distinct understanding that the teachers incur no responsibility in connection with the matter".

The request was approved on this condition.

The school enrolment was still only 206 at the end of 1892, but thereafter it increased rapidly. It reached 376 in 1895, 475 in 1900 and 617 in 1904.

Arncliffe was not sewered at this period, but cesspits were replaced by the pan system at the school at the beginning of 1893.

Frederick Mannell (later an Inspector) was appointed Headmaster at the beginning of 1893, and he immediately asked the Department to add another room to the residence and also a bathroom. He also asked that gas should be laid on from the main which passed the school. It was considered that an extra room was "*not needed*" and that a bathroom could not be considered "*on account of the limited funds*", but the laying on of gas was approved, and the necessary work was done by F.W. Bullock in May 1893, for 19.7.8.

A Cadet Corps was started at the school and in September 1894 Mr. Mannell applied for permission to have an "*armoury*" constructed at the school. This consisted of some cupboards, containing racks for the rifles. Mr Inspector Dwyer reported that some provision for the safe keeping of the rifles was necessary, and the expenditure of pounds 3.4.0 on the construction of cupboards was authorised.

There were a certain number of post-primary pupils in the school, and in 1894 Mr Mannell formed a Second Year post-primary class of 23, and immediately applied for the school to be raised to the status of a Superior Public School (this was a school with over 20 second year post-primary pupils). The Chief Inspector thought the application premature and recommended that the application be deferred for the time being. In 1895 Mr Mannell applied again, but for some reason the matter was deferred, and for some years no more was heard of it.

In March 1895 Mr Mannell again applied for another room to be added to the residence for a bathroom, and also for fixed tubs for the wash-house and other improvements. This time his application was approved. The work was carried out by Thomas Barnes for 61.15.0 pounds. The new room was built between the house and the kitchen.

In August of the same year Mr Mannell reported that the buildings only accommodated 260 children whereas the usual attendance was over 300. Mr Inspector Skillman reported that more accommodation was needed, and that since in the future the school would probably be divided into more than one department a separate building should be erected.

".. it would be more economical to do this than to make an extension of the existing stone schoolroom that would, in a little time, be again insufficient for the requirements of the school".

It was decided to erect a brick building. Twenty five tenders were received, and that of J.M.Barnett was accepted. The work was carried out in the summer of 1895-6, at a cost of pounds 350.0.0. There were thus three separate school buildings, each made of a different material.

This summer was extremely hot, and this had an adverse effect on the school attendance. Then there was an outbreak of typhoid fever, and also some diphtheria, which led to an even worse attendance. As Mr Mannell reported in April, *"Many people appear to consider Typhoid as infectious, and consequently will not allow their children to attend school"*. It was some time before the attendance returned to normal.

One result of the epidemic was a rumour that the school water supply was tainted. Although the school was connected with the water main, the water was led into tanks from which it was drawn by the children. It was suggested that the tanks were dirty. Mr Skillman reported that he did not think there was any truth in this rumour. Nevertheless, there seemed to be no reason why the water should not be taken direct from the main tap. In consequence it was decided to remove the tanks and re-arrange the pipes as necessary. The work was done in June 1896 by O'Brien and Co., at a cost of pounds 6.5.6.

Swimming classes were begun in October 1897, when arrangements were made for the boys to visit the baths at Lady Robinson's Beach on Friday afternoons in charge of a male teacher. Similar arrangements for the girls to visit the baths on Wednesdays were made shortly afterwards.

Mr Boland became Headmaster at the beginning of 1898, and in June he asked the Department to make a separate Infant's department. The enrolment was 418, with an ordinary attendance of about 320. Mr Boland reported:

"..I find great difficulty in properly supervising the work of the First Class, as they are away in a separate building. The enrolment in the First Classes is about 160, with an average of 120. In consequence of buildings for purposes of supervision, I am necessarily absent from my own classes for a considerable time daily, and by a Mistress being appointed over such a large number of infants better results should ensue".

Mr Skillman supported the application, but the Department decided to take no action.

As soon as he arrived Mr Boland complained that the residence was too

small for his family, which consisted of ten people. The Architect suggested that a two-storey addition should be made to the house on the south side, resulting in three additional rooms. The necessary remodelling of the existing house would mean that it faced south to Avenel Street, instead of east to the back premises of an adjoining house. This was approved, and in June 1898 a tender by J P Gibson was accepted. The work was completed in October at a cost of pounds 465.0.0. Certain other works were carried out, at an additional cost of pounds 31.15.0. The most important of these was the filling in of the old disused underground tank, which it was thought might be dangerous.

A petition was presented in 1899 asking for the school to be divided into boys' and girls' departments and for enlargement of the school buildings. Mr Carruthers, who was now Minister for Lands and whose constituency was evidently in the neighbourhood, wrote that more accommodation was needed. Mr Skillman reported that the enrolment was 460, with an ordinary attendance of about 355. The accommodation consisted of the stone building, with a main room measuring 36' x 19' and a classroom measuring 16' x 12'; the wooden building, with a main room measuring 42' x 21' and a classroom 15' x 21'; and the brick building, with a room measuring 51' x 22'. This provided space for 398 children, but *"owing to the division of classes and the number of rooms"* it was not possible to utilise all the space, and some of the rooms were overcrowded.

".. The population in the district is growing fast, and additional accommodation will soon be absolutely necessary".

He recommended that an Infants' school should be built, with room for 150 children.

Mr Wigram, the Architect, had a look at the school and pointed out:

".. the difficulty that exists in making extensions owing to the way the existing buildings have been scattered over the ground. Without increasing the number of buildings, I consider it best to make an extension to the last building erected, forming a wing at the northern end."

This suggestion was approved, plans were prepared, and in June 1900 a tender by H.A.Baglee was accepted. The work was completed in December at a final cost of pounds 682.0.0.

(This completes this article to the turn of the century. To be continued in another edition.)