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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.
March, 1979.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, March 16th, 1979, at 8.00 p.m.
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.
Business: General.
Syllabus Item: Mrs. Thelma Roberts, Hon. Secretary of Canterbury Historical Society will give a short illuminated talk on Canterbury, as the Municipality celebrates its 100th year, 1879 - 1979.

Supper Roster: Miss Heath, Captain, & Mesdames Turton, Havilah, Rootes and Moffitt.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President.
Phone 587.1159.

Mrs. E. Eardley,
Hon. Secretary.
Phone 59.8078

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.
Phone 587.9164

Mrs. E. Wright,
Hon. Treas. & Soc. Sec.
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Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer.
Phone 587.1159

'So much to do, so little done.'

..... Cecil Rhodes. (On his death bed)

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

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.1. "The Wolli Creek Valley"
- No.2. "Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway"
- No.3. "Saywells Tramway.. Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach."
- No.4. "Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway"
- 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.)

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

Mrs. E. Wright - Phone 599.4884
Miss B. Otton - Phone 59.4259 (after 8 p.m.)
Mrs. E. Eardley (Secretary) - Phone 59.8078.
Mr. A. Ellis - Phone 587.1159

If you have any items of Historical interest will you give them to Mrs. Eardley for publication in the Monthly Bulletin. Your news could awaken memories for others.

Social. Mrs. Wright, Social Secretary, is organising for your pleasure, a three-day tour to Tamworth - Armidale, for the long weekend, September 29th, 30th and October 1st, 1979, cost \$75.00. Deposit of \$10 secures your seat for the tour. For details ring Mrs. Wright, 599.4884. Be early to avoid disappointment.

History of Kingsgrove

1979 is the 175th anniversary of the grant of 500 acres of land to Hannah Laycock, which she named King's Grove. The Hurstville Historical Society will publish a history of Kingsgrove, based on a history written by Mr. Ron Hill in the early 1950s. If you have photographs concerning Kingsgrove or early residents, publications by schools or churches mentioning Kingsgrove's history, or newspaper references, or know old residents who may be able to help with additional information, please contact Brian Madden on 78 4538.

SYDNEY COVE.

- Talk given to the
St. George Historical Society
18th April 1975.
- W.R.Freeman of World Ship Society
N.S.W. Branch.

This evening I am going to talk to you about the development of Sydney Cove, particularly from a maritime point of view; for here was the very commencement of our history some 187 years ago.

Australia and the U.S.A. are probably the only two nations in the world that can point exactly to the spot where their history commenced. In our case it was at Sydney Cove. Just imagine what has happened in these ensuing 187 years. Think of the skyscrapers reaching up over 50 stories into the air, the Harbour Bridge, the Opera House, truly has any other place on earth seen such a transformation in such a short time.

As you probably all know, there is a flag pole on the footpath in Loftus Street, outside the Customs House, that indicates the landing spot. There is a plaque recording the facts, whilst the flag flown daily is the Union flag of 1788, that is today's flag, less the cross of St. Patrick.

The Tank Stream, which of course, was the reason for selecting Sydney Cove as the place of settlement, had a tidal estuary reaching back as far as Bridge Street. This is the reason for the name of Bridge Street, for here was the initial bridge crossing the Tank Stream from east to west.

From a shipping point of view, Sydney Cove proved to be an adequate anchorage although all stores and personnel were unloaded originally in ship's boats to the shore line. But as there was an ample supply of convicts, labour did not prove any problem.

Shortly after settlement two small jetties were constructed; one near the present Customs House known as the Government wharf and the other on the western side of the mouth of the Tank Stream, originally known as the Hospital wharf, later the King's and then the Queen's wharf. Neither of these wharves were adequate for ships to tie up alongside, so cargoes were still transferred by lighters from the sailing ships to the wharves. Convict labour was still readily available for this work.

In 1798 Robert Campbell arrived in Sydney and obtained property on the north western shore of the Cove, where in 1800 he set up Sydney Town's first commercial mercantile wharf and warehouse - known as Campbell's wharf. The warehouse buildings are still in existence.

Earlier than this, shipbuilding commenced at Sydney Cove, for although the building of ships was prohibited in Phillip's charter, as it was feared convicts would use them to escape, necessity to provide punts for unloading ships and small sailing vessels to communicate with Rose Hill (Parramatta) caused a change of outlook in this regard. It is recorded that the Rose Hill Packet, a clumsy sloop rigged hoy of about 10 tons berthon was constructed entirely of Australian hardwood and was built on a site about where Underwood Street is now situated, by an early convict shipwright, James Underwood.

In 1796, Governor Hunter established a government shipyard on the western side of the Cove, just north and adjacent to the King's wharf. From this yard several ocean going sailing vessels were launched including the schooner Cumberland of 28 tons in 1801, the schooner Integrity of 59 tons in 1804 and the brig Elizabeth Henrietta of 150 tons in 1816.

Sydney Cove grew slowly from 1810-1825, for another series of wharves had been built in Cockle Bay (now Darling Harbour), where most of the local trade such as produce from the up river farms was unloaded for the markets. These were at the foot of the present Market Street. However, Campbell's wharf was the main point for overseas trade for 40 to 50 years. You may be interested to learn that the small crane used in 1842 is still in existence. It is now on Goat Island near the stone store building.

In 1835, Governor Bourke appointed a military engineer, Captain George Barney, Colonial Engineer, and in 1838, Governor Gipps, who was also a military engineer, promoted Barney to the rank of Colonel and entrusted him with several major civil engineering works.

His greatest work was the transformation of Sydney Cove into Semi Circular Quay. He was also responsible for the construction of Fort Denison and the excavation of Argyle Cut (in conjunction with the Quay project).

The Semi Circular Quay was constructed of large blocks of hewn sandstone accurately placed in the form of an arc across the apex of the Cove, approximately in the position of the present ferry wharves. Behind this wall he used thousands of tons of broken stone to complete the reclamation of the foreshore. The Quay did not completely enclose the Cove as an outlet for the Tank Stream was left towards the western side of the area. The stone for this work was quarried from the Argyle Cut and the Tarpeian Way (near the Opera House) and the rubble filling came from Cockatoo Island and Fort Denison, as well as the Argyle Cut job.

This work employed the labour of many thousands of convicts for seven years from 1837 to 1844 and could be compared with such major works as the Pyramids or the Great Wall of China, in so far as it could not have been done at that time without the use of slave labour: for this was virtually what convict labour was. During the progress of the work in 1841, the convict transportation system to N.S.W. ended, so the building of Semi Circular Quay can be taken as the last work done by the often unjustly convicted men of that era. Although now largely obliterated it stands as an everlasting memorial to them.

Where the Tank Stream emptied into the Cove it formed a shallow sandy beach which could be walked across at low tide, but not when the tide was in. Over this two gentlemen named Moorehead and Young, built a small pedestrian footbridge about 100 ft. long, known as the Bon Accord Bridge. They charged a penny toll to cross it. This saved the walk upstream as far as Bridge Street where a free crossing was provided.

About 1855 the mouth of the Tank Stream was encased in a large brick conduit and the stone work quay completed into a full semi circle. At about the same time the name gradually changed by popular useage to Circular Quay. A name which, if you think about it, is completely impossible. How would ships gain access to a completely enclosed, Circular Quay? However, the name persists to this day.

Although steam vessels came to N.S.W. in 1821, (the first ship being the SOPHIA JANE), Circular Quay remained the berthing point for the windjammers and from 1850 to 1890, dozens of these fine sailing ships could be seen alongside the stone quay unloading their cargoes from England and loading wool for the other side of the world.

Very famous ships such as CUTTY SARK - THERMOPYLAE - LIGHTNING and SORBRAON were often visitors to Circular Quay.

During this period the ferry services were developing and initially the facilities comprised the Old Queen's wharf in the S.W. corner, Prince's Stairs in the centre of the Quay and a jetty in the S.E. corner near the foot of Phillip Street. These berths were used by the Manly - Watsons Bay - Mosman - Neutral Bay and North Shore services respectively.

At the same time the first horse punt or vehicle ferry the TRANSIT commenced operation between North Sydney and a dock on the eastern side of the Cove, quite near to where Macquarie Street now meets the water. At that time the eastern headland (Bennelong Pt.) carried the original FORT MACQUARIE.

Sailing ship masters continued to object to the presence of steamers as the sparks from their funnels could set fire to their furled sails whilst the soot and smuts soiled their carefully scrubbed decks.

However, progress cannot be stopped and a Parliamentary Select Committee was set up in 1872, for report on improved useage of the wharfage at the Quay. Most suffestions favoured a large number of small berths, whilst an influential private civil engineer strongly contended there should be a few large berths capable of accommodating the largest liners likely to be built. (I wonder if he ever thought in the terms of a Queen Mary!) Like most select committees no decisions were reached and a stalemate ensued until 1876 when the Australian Steam Navigation Co., bought Campbells wharf, improving it in 1877-78 including the construction of two new jetties. This finally brought steam to Sydney Cove.

In 1877 the Orient Line commenced a service to Australia with the LUSITANIA which arrived in August and used West Circular Quay as its terminal. In 1880 the P & O followed suit and steam completely took over the western side of the Quay from sail. There were three berths on this side.

The ferry terminals were developing in the centre of the Quay in the late 1880s, and finally in 1892 the Manly Service moved from the site of the old Queen's wharf at the foot of Globe Street to a position near its present location.

Woolloomooloo was being developed as a cargo depot in order to concentrate passenger services at the Quay resulting in the German and American services also using Circular Quay as their terminals.

1900 saw the arrival of the 12,000 ton White Star vessels MEDIC, PERSIC and AFRIC - they all used Circular Quay West and steam finally ousted sail from Sydney Cove.

1900 also had a much grimmer side. An outbreak of Bubonic Plague broke out on the Sydney waterfront and an area in Darling Harbour between Erskine Street and the Gas Works was quarantined. The Parramatta and Lane Cove ferries and the Balmain services which normally ran from Darling Harbour were diverted to the Quay, increasing ferry traffic considerably.

In 1901 the Sydney Harbour Trust built a series of wharves at Bennelong Point - so that excursion ferries etc., could ply from there and so relieve pressure at the Quay. At the same time new docks for the horse punts were constructed on the N.E. point of the Cove - from where the vehicular ferries ran across the harbour to Milsons Pt. This traffic increased rapidly and by 1930 was completely unable to cope. The service was continuous; just as fast as the ferries could be loaded and despatched they

set off on the short cross harbour trip. The heyday of the ferry services was now on, and ferries ran from the Quay to all points across and up and down the harbour.

1900, 1911 and 1924 all saw alterations to the ferry wharves and just prior to the opening of the Harbour Bridge in 1932, Circular Quay was the busiest Ferry Terminal in the world. At this time over 41 million passengers were carried annually in 51 ferry boats; and a six minute service operated between Circular Quay and Milsons Point.

Up until 1900 transport from the Quay had been by horse bus or hansom cab, but electric tram lines were laid in 1899 making it the hub of Sydney's traffic pattern, a position it held until the Harbour Bridge and the Underground Railway took over in 1932.

Started in 1924, opened in 1932, the Harbour Bridge had a marked effect on Circular Quay where, on its opening, the ferry services slumped and the area around the ferry docks took on a dejected atmosphere. However, the magnificence of the bridge approach structures stand as boundary on Sydney Cove's western side.

What might have been! Like most other important places, many grand schemes were devised for the improvement of Circular Quay. What a pity the 1909 plan of grand avenues and parks did not see the light of day.

When I first had personal experience of Circular Quay in 1933, the Harbour Bridge was in service, so I did not see the ferries at their peak. However, it was the day of the big liner, and at West Circular Quay we saw the P & O's NARKUNDA, MOOLTAN, MALOJA, STRATHNAVER & STRATHAIRD, whilst on the eastern side the American glamour ships MARIPOSA & MONTERAY ended their voyage from San Francisco. The E & A ships to the far East, CHANGTE & TAIPING also berthed at the Quay.

No.1 Circular Quay East - alongside the Fort Macquarie Tram Depot, was the regular berth of the QUEEN OF THE TASMAN, the USS Coy. of N.Z. AWATEA - where she docked stern inwards at exactly 8.10a.m. every Friday morning, leaving on her return voyage at exactly 8.00p.m. the same evening. This beautiful ship, commanded by Captain Arthur (8.10) Davey, was the pride of the Pacific. What a pity she only saw 3 years of Tasman service, being sunk during the North African landings.

During the war troopships and hospital ships used the Quay, and amongst them was the brand new Dutch liner ORANGE and the Cunard liner MAURETANIA.

The QUEEN MARY and the QUEEN ELIZABETH never tied up at the Quay, but always moored in Athol Bight - they both drew over 40 ft. of water and at that time the Quay was not deep enough for them. Similarly, the AQUITANIA (the only 4 funnelled ship ever to visit Sydney), used Woolloomooloo as its berth.

The city's Underground Electric Railway System always envisaged a loop including a station at Circular Quay, but it took years to reach fruition and it wasn't until 20th January 1956, that we saw the Wynyard - St. James loop completed and Circular Quay station opened.

Meanwhile, the growth of motor transport beyond all previous estimates made it necessary to provide an outlet for Harbour Bridge traffic to the Eastern Suburbs. Hence we saw the overhead roadway superimposed over the railway, making quite an imposing but somewhat stark structure, stretching right across the Quay.

Another major original landmark at Sydney Cove was the old Commissariat Store, officially opened by Macquarie in 1812. It was demolished in 1940 to make way for a new home for the Maritime Services Board, the old office building of the then Sydney Harbour Trust having to be demolished to make way for the City Railway. A small, but magnificent, bust of Captain Phillip stands at the Main Entrance to the M.S.B. building.

In 1959 the authorities demolished the wharf and wharf sheds at West Circular Quay and built the Sydney Passenger Terminal. A magnificent structure costing over \$4 million, 720 ft. long with 42 ft. of water alongside and capable of handling 2000 passengers at a time, it has served Sydney well in the 14 years since its opening in 1961. Such ships as the CANBERRA, ORIANA, ORSOVA, IBERIA, HIMALAYA and many other liners, including the foreign lines that have brought out many migrants, have all berthed there.

Such is progress, that air transport has diminished the need for such a facility and not it is more generally used as a tie up spot for cruise liners, than for overseas ships on line voyages. The exceptions are the Lloyd Triestino ships MARCONI and GALILEO, which still conduct a flourishing trade between Italy and Australia.

The most famous visitor to the Overseas Terminal was the Royal yacht BRITANIA, whilst the largest remaining liner in the world, the FRANCE called in for a day during a world cruise.

The latest and most imposing structure is of course, the Opera House. Built on a site that has ranged from an aboriginal camp to an artillery fort and a tram shed, we now have as the eastern bastion of Sydney Cove, the most remarkable building erected in the past decade.

With the southern pylon of the Harbour Bridge on the western side, is there anywhere else in the world that could look so grand, so different, than the Sydney Cove of some 187 years ago.