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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

June 1979.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, June 15th, 1979, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Miss Macaulay, B.A., M.Ed., M.A.C.E., will give a talk
entitled: "An Indian Experience". This will be a most
interesting talk, taking us amongst People we know so little
about.

Supper Roster: Captain, Mrs. H. Jones, & Mesdames J. Woods, H. Turner,
C. Murphy, N. McDougall.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President.
Phone 587.1159.

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.
Phone 587.9164

Mrs. E. Eardley,
Hon. Sec. & Bulletin
Editor
Phone 59.8078.

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

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

'Life is surely a mixture of pain and pleasure, sadness and delight, in a world which is dazzling in its majesty, and yet where every creature is some other creature's food.'

Extract from "Visit to the Sherpas"
by Jennifer Bourdillon.

(2)

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

It is with regret that we record the death of Mrs. Christison, late of Bexley, one of our very early and most regular members.

To the Family of the late Mrs. Christison, the President and Members extend their deep sympathy.

The following letter has been received from Mrs. Christison's daughter on behalf of the family:

"My Mother, Mrs. Elsie Pearl Christison, who was a Foundation Member and Life Member of the Society, passed away on 3rd May, 1979, aged 92 years.

I would like to thank Mrs. E. Wright, the Honorary Treasurer, for proposing that my Mother be made a Life Member. This honour gave my Mother much pleasure. She was always keen on History and especially Local History as she had lived the whole of her life in Rockdale and Bexley.

Kindest regards."

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 - Ph. 599.4884, Miss B. Otton - Ph. 59.4259 (after 8 p.m.)

Mrs. E. Eardley - Sec. Ph. 59.8078, Mr. A. Ellis - Ph. 587.1159

SOCIAL. OCTOBER LONG WEEKEND.

Mrs. Wright, Social Secretary, has organised 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 June Meeting please. For details ring Mrs. Wright 599.4884 (81 Watkin Street, Bexley.) Waiting List Only.

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KOGARAH PUBLIC SCHOOL - Part 2.

- J.J. Fletcher
 Division of Planning
 N.S.W. Dept. of Education
 - July 1970.

A New Building & a Change of Site.

When Inspector W McIntyre investigated the request he too, considered that a public school separated from the Church would be desirable. From a point of economy he considered that the three schools in the district would operate far more efficiently if combined into one. So he recommended the erection of a new school building & residence on the site to be donated. This site was part of the "Bexley" Estate; one acre was given by Mr. W. Wolfen, Consul for Sweden & Norway, and the other acre purchased by the Local School Board*.

McIntyre went as far as suggesting that the school building should be erected of locally available flagstone, be big enough to accommodate 100 children & have a residence with five rooms, a verandah at the front & a passage-way from the front to the back, of the residence. The building was finished in November 1876 on a site just behind the present three-storeyed Kogarah High School building, facing Regent Street.

The Effect of the Public Instruction Act, 1880.

Of the many clauses in the *Public Instruction Act, 1880*, the one which most immediately effected Kogarah School was strangely enough the one relating to aid to denominational schools; as from the beginning of January 1883, "all aid to such Schools from the Consolidated Revenue shall wholly cease ..." It meant that neither the Roman Catholic nor the Wesleyan Denominational Schools would receive aid from the Government from 1883 onwards. A difficult course lay ahead of them; either press on & support their schools alone, or join with the Public School. If they joined with the Public School they would have to follow the same course of instruction as was followed by Public Schools; but this should have presented no problems as they had been doing this since 1866 in order to receive aid from the Council of Education.

The Roman Catholic School elected to continue alone; the Wesleyan School joined with the Public School. The immediate effect was an urgent need for additional accommodation for nearly 60 children which was met by a wooden addition to the Kogarah School. This rapid growth in enrolments developed into a regular pattern for many years into the twentieth century.

* The Local Patrons became known as Local School Boards under the Council for Education.

Mrs Nevin.

Mrs Nevin commenced duties at the school in 1882, replacing Mr Chapman, as teacher and remained at the school until she died in 1886. Whether she was a widow, or just separated from her husband is unknown, but she arrived with her 4 children, 2 of whom were in their teenage years. She was quite disgusted at the state of the residence:

I cannot find words to express how dirty & uncomfortable the place is owing to the state of the chimneys. I am sometimes obliged to try & cook in the open air.

She also found that the schoolroom was in poor condition despite the fact that it was only six years old.

However, when a small kitchen & storeroom were added; the white-ant eaten floorboards replaced in the schoolroom; the interior given a coat of whitewash; the windows blown in by a gale repaired, and the pit closets emptied & cleaned ("they are offensive as the wind carried the smell right into the school"), Mrs Nevin was satisfied.

Coming of the Railway.

Probably no other single factor has influenced the development of Kogarah School as much as the extension of the railway line to Kogarah & beyond. By 1880 Kogarah had been laid out in a regular pattern of streets, crossing at right-angles to each other. The school site was a rectangle which included the area now used as an overhead bridge for traffic. Railway Parade from Gladstone Street to Montgomery Street, did not exist.

To bring the railway to Kogarah required resuming part of the school site, & this accounts in part for the irregular-shaped block that the present Kogarah High School is built on; but it also cut obliquely across many of Kogarah's streets, & this explains why the streets around the railway station run at such peculiar angles to each other.

When the trains began using the lines, some of the children took great delight in disappearing from the school grounds during the morning & lunch recesses & re-appearing on the edge of the cutting (where the overhead bridge now stands) & watching the trains go by. They ran into very stern opposition from Mrs Nevin.

More important was what the trains carried - children from neighbouring suburbs intent on attending Kogarah Public School. In the years to come they would flood the school, so that accommodation could not be built fast enough, & local halls & church buildings would be used for the overflow. As the school gradually developed into one which offered more than just primary education, children would come Hurstville,

Waterfall, Miranda, Bexley, Peakhurst, Rockdale, Mortdale, Arncliffe, Sandringham, Cronulla, Erskineville, Tempe, Banksia, Sans Souci, The National Park, Dumbleton & Marrickville. But let us not jump too far ahead.

The coming of the railway almost meant the going of Mrs. Nevin. In 1885, a small group of landholders from the Kogarah district waited on the Minister for Public Instruction (& in his absence the Under-Secretary) & complained of Mrs Nevin's incompetence to manage the school, her unpopularity & of the desperate need to replace her with a married male teacher. The Under-Secretary noted their grievances & asked the local Inspector to examine the situation & report. The Inspector discovered that Mrs Nevin was extremely popular with the parents of children attending her school - & they wrote some 30 to 40 letters saying so; Mrs Nevin's instruction, far from being incompetent, was very efficient & the children were progressing quite well. It also was apparent that the gentlemen concerned knew virtually nothing about the state of the school under Mrs Nevin's care. The Inspector noted that these gentlemen owned much of the land around Kogarah Railway Station & were anxious to sell it. It appears that they believed their subdivisions would sell more easily if prospective buyers could see that the school was managed by a married man - hence the deputation.

The Department of Public Instruction politely informed the gentlemen that it was quite satisfied with Mrs Nevin & her school.

Prior to this deputation, Mrs Nevin had been under consideration for a transfer, but this was now very awkward, for to move her to another school now, would appear to have acceded to the deputation's wishes.

The matter was resolved when Mrs. Nevin died suddenly at the end of 1886.

Pupil Teachers.

During 1886, the staff consisted of Mrs Nevin; Mr E W Cadman & Miss Elizabeth Freeney, both pupil teachers; & Mr S.A.Gurney, a temporary assistant. As Kogarah School had a large number of pupil teachers over the years, it is worthwhile knowing a little of their history & the conditions under which they worked.

The pupil teacher system had been introduced into public schools in the early 1850's in an attempt to supply schools with teachers who had had some training. Usually, the pupil teachers were about 14 when they began their 4 year course. This involved teaching a class every day & in turn being instructed, either before or after school by the head teacher, in more advanced subjects & the "art of teaching". For this they received a small salary & at the end of their course, if they qualified, were admitted to the Training School for additional training in teaching methods.

After 1860, a pupil teacher was appointed to a school when the average attendance reached 50. The school was then divided into two sections & the pupil teacher taught one section & the teacher the other - usually in the same room.

A New Building.

By 1890 the school had outgrown its accommodation. The Minister for Public Instruction, Hon. J.H.Carruthers, took a personal interest in the problem as the school was in his electorate & not far from his home. After visiting the school, he wrote a minute on the subject, of which a copy is attached. He refers to the poor appearance & accommodation, & to the fact that a Roman Catholic School could be a possible alternative school if conditions at Kogarah were not improved.

An interesting sentence in this minute is the one:

"Let the architect prepare a plan for a two-storey building of some pretension to style on the part marked on plan - providing adequate accommodation for girls & infants."

This sentence explains the rather ornate nature of the 1891 building in the grounds of the present High School.

The building was one of the most elegant buildings erected since the 1870's when the Council of Education was creating 'palaces' - schools such as Newtown, Cleveland St & Ultimo.

The architect arranged the building so that at a future time it could be extended. The plans allowed accommodation for 400 children in 4 rooms; 2 rooms on each floor, each to contain 100 children. With further extensions it could accommodate 800 children in 8 rooms with a large central hall for assemblies of the whole school.

Carruthers was worried about the tile roof. Both the Architect & E.Wunderlich of Rocke & Co., maintained that the new French tiles would stay on & be watertight without being set in mortar; they had remained in place during a 50 m.p.h. gale before they were wired down, & once individually wired there were no problems,

Carruthers bowed to their superior technical knowledge but added, "if there is any leakage hereafter, the architect will bear in mind my warning". From 1920 onwards there were numerous complaints about leaks in the roof, but usually this was the result of tiles broken during severe storms, or as in 1925, the corrosion of the lead valleys.

During 1891, J.H.Carruthers lost his portfolio as Minister for Public Instruction to Hon. J.B.Suttor. Though the Minister has the right to open school buildings, Suttor graciously raised no objection to Carruthers officially opening the new building when it was finished late in 1891.

In 1892 the Infants' School occupied the top floor of the building & the Girls' School the ground floor. At this stage the school was divided into 3 departments - Boys, Girls & Infants, but each department was commonly referred to as a school, for indeed they operated almost independently of each other though they were under the one headmaster.

The staff consisted of the headmaster, one assistant & three pupil teachers in the primary section (the Boys & Girls Depts.); & in the Infants' School, the mistress, one assistant & two pupil teachers.

The School Becomes a Superior School.

Another change occurred at this time (1891). The school was raised to the status of a Superior Public School. A Superior Public School was very similar to a present-day Central School, where the school has primary classes with a number of children doing secondary work.

A Superior school could be established if a Fifth Class could be formed of not more than 20 children who had completed the Fourth Class course. The Fourth Class in those days consisted of children who were well advanced in their school work & whose ages would have been 'tween 12 & 14 years. In Fifth Class, in addition to more advanced work in the secondary subjects *, the boys were given Mathematics, Latin & Science & the girls took French & Sanitary Science. "Sanitary Science" mainly included cooking; it was this subject which later developed into Domestic Science, then Home Science.

For instruction in these subjects, no extra fee was necessary, other than the 3d. per child per week already being paid. Where the regular staff were unable to teach these subjects efficiently, special teachers were brought in, & as numbers increased, became permanent members of staff.

In a way, the year 1891 marks the beginning of the secondary schools such as the Boys' Commercial or Intermediate High School, the Girls' Domestic Science School, & St. George Girls' High School which were to develop from the Kogarah Superior School, & culminate in High Schools independent of the primary section.

No attempt has been made to trace the secondary schools' history except incidentally as they affected the life of the Superior School. Yet it is very difficult to separate the development of these schools, as the fact that Kogarah was able to offer secondary-type education made it a centre for students over a wide area of the St. George District.

* The ordinary subject for 4th class were reading, writing, dictation, arithmetic, grammar, geography, history, object lessons, singing, drawing, scripture, drill, euclid (geometry) & needlework (for the girls).

This greatly affected the rate of growth, which in turn placed a far greater demand on accommodation than could have been foreseen in the early 1890's. Accommodation & playground space would without doubt have been sufficient for the needs of the growing suburb of Kogarah, but the school was swamped by the growth of rapidly developing suburbs both near (Sans Souci) & far (Waterfall).

Attempts were made in 1891 to improve the playground, & for Arbor Day that year, there was considerable work done in removing stumps, clearing stones, trenching the ground & manuring, & finally planting trees.

The playground began to pose a problem as the enrolment rose. In 1894 the heavy "traffic" on it made the headmaster, James Murray, remark:

*"In dry & windy weather the dust is almost unbearable,
while in wet weather it becomes a still greater
nuisance from the water lying on it ..."*

Over 300 sq.yds. of asphaltting was done to overcome this problem, & this was added to repeatedly over the next 40 years.

Expansion Continues.

By 1897 accommodation was seriously strained. In the Girls' section of the 1891 building, there was accommodation for 204 girls in 2 rooms (as mentioned before, it was usual in those days for several classes to be taught in the one room); but the enrolment was 262, 240 having been present when the Inspector paid a visit.

This situation was alleviated in 1898 by erecting an additional wing on the southern side of the building.

In the following year the Boys' School (held in the 1876 building & additions) had outgrown its accommodation. There was satisfactory room for 350 boys, but nearly 400 were enrolled & 380 were attending regularly. In January 1900 this enrolment had risen to 426. Not only this, but despite the additional accommodation provided for the Girls' School in 1898, the 300 places could not accommodate the 350 girls enrolled. The Infants' School was also in difficulties - room for 220, but an enrolment of over 220 & growing.

Early in 1900 Inspector Skillman recommended that the old teacher's residence (built 1876) be demolished & replaced by a "commodious schoolroom for boys". Thus the boys using part of the 1891 building could be re-located & the girls would then have more room in the 1891 building. No action followed immediately.

In May 1900, J.H.Carruthers led a deputation to the Minister for Public Instruction, Hon. John Perry. The deputation consisted of the Mayor & aldermen of Kogarah Council, & members of the school Board. Their basic demands fell into 2 categories:

- 1) the need for additional accommodation
- 2) " " to enlarge the playground.

The Minister promised to visit the school to see for himself what the conditions were like; this he did & on 22nd. May 1900 gave the Department's architect instructions to draw up plans for a new boys' school.

Unfortunately funds for the work were not available in 1900 or 1901, & the delay caused by this factor lead to a renewal of deputations & continued requests by Kogarah Council to know what was being done. In July 1902 tenders were called & towards the end of the year, the 1876 building was being demolished. The new building was completed in September 1903 at a cost of pounds 4,397.0.0. While waiting for this building a number of classes occupied the Oddfellows' Hall.

MINUTE BY THE MINISTER OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION.

SUBJECT KOGARAH PUBLIC SCHOOL.

Department of Public Instruction
Sydney Oct. 1, 1890.

On visiting this School I found that the accomodation is scanty & the appearance of the buildings very poor. As a R.C.School is in the neighbourhood competing & as the locality is growing steps must be taken to increase the accomodation & improve the appearance of the Schools. There is a piece of vacant ground shewn on the sketch hereon which should be acquired by resumption or purchase & for that purpose obtain R & Wrench's Valuation & negotiate with the owners.

Let the Architect prepare a plan for a two story building of some pretension to style on the part marked on plan - providing adequate accomodation for girls & infants. Also remove wooden shed now doing duty as boys or other School to the rear.

J.H.C.

Dept. of Public Instruction
2 Oct. '90. 46168

Mr Bush is going out today to make
survey of the addl. land G.S. 2.10.90.

Very Urgent
The Architect.
A.C. 2.10.90.

E'cd 1. Dec. 1890.

Messrs R & W asked for valuation C.G.
8.10.90.

Est. pounds 3,000.0.0.

.. article to be concluded.