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PRICE 5c.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Registered for Posting as
a Publication Category 'B'

24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.
November 1979.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, November 16th, 1979, at 8.00 p.m.
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.
Business: General.
Syllabus Item: Mr. & Mrs. Bill Foster very recently enjoyed a wonderful holiday which included a vast area of the Canadian Rockies, and the West Coast of America, and they have kindly offered to share this experience with us per medium of their coloured slides. Mrs. Foster will be the Commentator. I am sure this evening will be one to look forward to.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Tarlington, Captain, and Mesdames Napper, Robb and Miss H. Whyte.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President.
Phone 587.1159

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

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

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

'Genius is the infinite capacity to make use of everyone and everything.'
.... From 'The New Year',
by Pearl Buck.

(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.

* * * * *

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.

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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

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EXTRACT FROM "BACK TO MORTDALE SCHOOL" - 1955.

- E Fletcher
- 9th September 1955.

- Obtained from
Mrs J Wotherspoon
Mortdale Public School.

EARLY DAYS - A History of the Mortdale-Oatley District.

As told by Mr.E.Fletcher, of Frederick Street, Penshurst; Mr Fletcher was one of the pupils who enrolled on the opening day of the first Mortdale School, built in 1888.

Settlement -

James Oatley had a grant of 300 acres of land on George's River, also one of 175 acres in the Kingsgrove-Moorefields district, and another of 40 acres in the South Hurstville area. Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, some time prior to 1861, acquired the south-western portion of Dr Robert Townson's grant. This portion embraces what is now known as Mortdale. It is from these two persons that Oatley and Mortdale derived their respective names, though originally Mortdale was known as Mort's Hill.

Like other areas in the St.George district these two were cut up and acquired by others. At Oatley, on the eastern side of the railway, the Griffiths family had a substantial estate which was sub-divided and sold at various times from the mid eighties. On the western side what was known as the Oatley Township Estate was dealt with in a similar manner during the nineties. At Mort's Hill, the brickworks, established in 1884, had, and still has, a substantial area and the Kemp family had a farm area extending from Mort's Road (now Colbourne Avenue) on the east to Boundary Road on the west: When the railway was put through in 1885 it cut this farm into two practically equal portions. Gates, adjacent to the brickworks, provided access from one portion to the other. Then in 1888, practically half of the eastern portion was acquired for school purposes, and finally about 1920, the balance of the Kemp property was acquired by the Railway Dept. for railway purposes and includes what is known as Railway Reserve. The original farmhouse stood in the paddock below the school, but later a two-storied building was erected facing the road and adjacent to the school residence. These three residences - the old farmhouse, the new residence, and the school residence - have since been demolished to make way for school extensions. Towards Penshurst, Mrs Parkes had a farm area which had also been cut in two by the railway. Gates which were in the vicinity of where the subway is now located, gave access from one part to the other. At Penshurst, Mr. Myles McCrae had an extensive area and his old residence, "Kintail", still stands. A macadamised road, now known as Railway Parade, ran through this property from Laycock Road to Mort's Road, and was the only direct access to Mortdale as it then existed. The area bounded by McCrae's southern boundary (approximately the present Grove Avenue on the north, railway on the west, the present-day Princes Street on the east, and Mort's Road on the south, had been sub-divided into building blocks sometime during the early eighties). A few houses, mostly semi-detached places, had been

erected, and most of them still exist and can be picked out quite readily, though some of them have been more or less modernised.

The most prominent building was the two-storied one, still existing at the Princes Street corner. Here was located the first Post Office, combined with a grocery store. About 1897 the Post Office was moved to the two-storied building, the front of which has been added to in more recent years, opposite the school, and was managed by Mrs Phillips. Mort's Road was macadamised from Princes Street corner to approximately Kemp Street, whence it meandered as a bush track to Forest Road. It crossed the railway through Mort's Gates. The present business area of Mortdale, bounded by the railway Mort's Road, Crump Street (approximately) and Kemp's norther boundary, which corresponds with the back alignment of George Street allotments, was a fenced paddock of fairly thick bush and scrub. It was known as Newman's paddock. A Mr Newman lived in a brick cottage nearby and since demolished to make way for railway alterations, was was the only residence that side of the line.

Newman seems to have been the caretaker of this property. About 1894 it was sub-divided into building blocks and sold at auction under the name of "Mort's Estate", the auctioneer being Mr.E.C.V.Broughton, and so Mortdale began to grow. Just about this time Victoria Avenue was constructed from Laycock Road (now Penshurst Street), to Mort's Road. Mortdale Station, opened in 1897, was to the southward of the gates, with the platform ramps adjacent to them.

What the population of Mortdale was when the Railway opened in 1885 is doubtful - probably not more than 30 or 40 persons, perhaps fewer. When we took up residence at Oatley shortly after the opening of the Railway; the population increased five persons (ourselves) with one house. Almost simultaneously another family - Mr. Orange and his son, together with his housekeeper (Mrs Baker) and her daughter - came on the scene. He was caretaker for the Griffiths Estate and lived in the brick cottage in Oatley Avenue between Frederick Street corner and the hotel, and is the oldest building in Oatley. The census of Oatley, early in 1886, was 9 persons and 2 houses. From then on growth was fairly rapid and homes began to spring up in all directions.

Raine & Horne and Richardson & Wrench conducted the sales from time to time and special trains brought crowds of people out to attend the sales which were very successful. Oatley's first Post Office was a cottage which stood on portion of the site now occupied by the hotel. There are two coral trees growing on the Reserve opposite the hotel. They were planted there by my father over 60 years ago - the more southerly of the two was grown from a slip brought from Tongarra, a few miles outside Albion Park - the other was a cutting off the first tree.

James Oatley's burial place does not appear to be quite definitely known other than it took place on some part of his estate. In 1925, a Mr.W. Siversten, of Bexley, came across his tombstone lying on some vacant land on the Moorefields Estate. In an article in "Truth", under date 8th May 1921, reference is made to: "an old grave near what appears to have been a farm. This farm is situated on the country lying between Penshurst and

Lakemba. On the slab of stone covering the grave is the following - "Sacred to the memory of James Oatley. Obit October 8, 1839. Aetat 70 years." But the site of the grave was not stated in the article. James Oatley was a watch and clockmaker, Frederick Oatley, whose grave is in a paddock at Moorefields was his son. Many years ago a grave existed on the hill overlooking Mortdale and Oatley. It was on the Oatley side of Boundary Road at approximately the Waratah Street corner, but there was nothing on it to indicate who was buried there. I last saw it about 1897, but it cannot be located now because the site has been built up completely.

On Oatley Point, there was many years ago, a large, round, flat rock which, judging by its appearance and surroundings, seemed to have been an aborigines' feating ground. Wind and rain storms during the past 60 years have covered it with soil and growth and it is not visible now.

Railway -

Beyond all doubt the district between Hurstville and river owes its rapid growth to the railway's establishment. The opening of the railway from Illawarra Junction (Eveleigh) to Hurstville took place on 15th October 1884. The intermediate stations were Erskineville, St.Peters, Marrickville (now Sydenham), Tempe, Arncliffe, Rockdale and Kogarah. Carlton was opened in 1887. Banksia on 21st October, 1906, and Allawah on 25th October, 1925. The extension - Hurstville to Sutherland was opened for business on 26th December, 1885, with Como as the intermediate station. The Brickworks Siding came into use in 1886. Penshurst opened in 1886. Oatley in 1886, and Mortdale 20th March 1897. Jannali was opened on 7th February, 1931. The extensions beyond Sutherland took place in subsequent years, until Nowra was reached. The duplication between Hurstville and Waterfall was completed by 22nd March 1891. This was a big step forward as it permitted a more frequent service which hitherto had been confined to three or four trains daily. Oatley platform, which originally was only a dump, was lengthened and became a station with "up" and "down" platforms, and a resident station-master in charge. The residence was built on railway land alongside the "down" platform. The deviation, Como to Mortdale, was carried out in 1905 and resulted in Oatley Station being moved about one-quarter of a mile westward to its present site and opened on 7th July, 1905. A subway took the place of the original level crossing and gates. The station-master's residence was abolished. The night officer's residence which stood near the beginning of the big rock cutting below the school, had been destroyed by fire a few years previously and had not been re-built.

Oatley was re-named in Oatley's in 1889, but the original name was restored in 1890. The present island platform with a goods yard adjoining, was opened on 7th July, 1905. Automatic signals were installed south of the station on 1st November, 1918, and on the north side on 12th January 1926. The goods yard was closed on 22nd. December, 1940. Mortdale Station was moved northward beyond the original gates on 14th September, 1922. The original station has been demolished, while

a subway has replaced the old level crossing and gates. Penshurst Station was extended northwards, thus cutting out the level crossing at gates which were replaced with an overhead traffic bridge. It is not possible to name the first station-masters at the various stations. Mr Hall, who lived in the railway residence which stood just about where the Post Office is now, was S.M. at Hurstville for a number of years in those early times. Mr John Brown was the first resident S.M. at Oatley. He died there on 3rd June, 1902. Mr Cuneo was S.M. at Como for a number of years.

Hurstville is named after the Rev. W.A.Hurst (Wesleyan) of Tempe, who took a very great interest in the district. Penshurst is named after a locality of the same name in England. Mortdale after Thomas Mort. Oatley after Hames Oatley, and Como after Lake Como in Italy. Sutherland is named after Forby Sutherland, one of Captain Cook's seamen and "the first white man to die in this newly discovered land."

The first electric trains in N.S.W. ran from Sydney to Oatley and began to operate on 1st March, 1926, and were extended to Sutherland on 12th August 1926, and to National Park on 24th December, 1926.

Schools -

The nearest public school was Hurstville, which opened in 1876, though there had been schools held in various kinds of buildings for some years prior. Mortdale Public School was erected in 1888, and was a brick building which housed three blocks of desks and forms. My sister and I were two of the pupils enrolled on opening day. Mr Joseph Coleman was the teacher in charge and he occupied the school residence, a brick cottage alongside the school building. The cottage has since been demolished to make way for another building. I think I am right in saying that the actual opening day was in January 1889, when schools resumed after the 1888 Christmas recess. The school was not quite ready when we presented ourselves and we had to come back a week later. My stay at Mortdale was not a very long one as in 1892, I was sent back to Hurstville, where I had been before Mortdale opened. Somewhere about this time a classroom was added to Mortdale School and Miss Frize was appointed assistant teacher, and she remained at the school for a number of years. I am sorry I cannot add any more details about the school, but no doubt somebody else in the district will be able to do so. Mr Garden succeeded Mr Coleman and some old pupils of these two gentlemen will be able to relate some interesting details of Mr Coleman's later days and Mr Garden's early days at the school.

Naturally, when I returned to Hurstville, my interests centred round that school.

Church Activities -

The first Sunday School was organised by an elderly widow (Mrs Smith) and her three daughters (the Misses Bessie, Georgina, and Florence Smith) and the classes were held in her private residence at Oatley. The cottage still stands and is known as No.27 Woonoona Parade. There is no way of establishing the exact date of the beginning of the school, but it was about 1889 or 1890. It continued for about 3 years, when failing health caused the dear old lady to give it up. At intervals during the currency of the school, church services, mainly for children, were held by visiting clergymen, two of whose names can be recalled, viz., Rev.W.Patterson and Rev. M Moore. The former came from Parramatta and the latter from Sydney. After the school ceased to function there was a gap until 1894 when Mrs Saunders and family took up residence in "Dewerara" Cottage, Woronora Parade, Oatley. This residence is still in existence. Soon after her arrival, Mrs Saunders started a Sunday School and these activities have continued without a break ever since. The school grew so rapidly that it soon outgrew the accommodation available at the cottage. In 1898, St. Peter's Church, Mortdale was erected and the Sunday School was moved to it. Church services were held at the cottage at regular intervals and were conducted by Rev. M.Walker (Wesleyan, as then styled), Rev. McKay (Presbyterian) and Rev. W.Killworth (C of E). In fact, Mr Killworth, who was Rector of the Parish of St.George (which extended from Kogarah to the River) was responsible for the building of St. Peter's Church, Mortdale. This lonely little outpost of 1898 is now the Parish Church of its own Parish. In 1889, Rev. James Clarke was appointed Rector of the Parish of St.George, as it was then known, and continued in charge until 1895. During his travels in the Holy Land, he obtained a bottle of water from the River Jordan and he used this water in connection with baptismal services during the early nineties. My youngest sister was baptised with this water and no doubt there are others living in the district who can claim the same distinction. Mr Clarke was a fine horseman, a very fast walker, and a splendid preacher. The present St.George's Church, Hurstville, was erected in 1889, and took the place of a wooden building which was propped up on the graveyard side with several large logs.

Methodist (then known as Wesleyan) Church services were held at regular intervals at Mrs Kemp's residence during the early nineties. This residence has long since disappeared to make way for school extensions.

The first public school at Mortdale and the first Sunday School at Oatley have an interesting feature. Mr Coleman, whose first wife had died, married Miss Florence Smith, thus bringing about as it were, a union of the two first schools. Miss Smith also was the first bride from Oatley. Following an old-time custom, the newly married couple were vigorously tin-kettled for several hours on their wedding night. This was the first and only tin-kettling at Oatley.

It is interesting to note that the large parish of St.George which was sparsely populated, has since been divided into 6 parishes - Kogarah, Hurstville, South Hurstville, Penshurst, Mortdale and Oatley, and each one is thickly populated.

During the early 1900's, church services were also held in the School of Arts Building at Oatley.

Social Life and Services -

We had to make our own pleasures and succeeded very well, and taken all round, we were a happy community. Band of Hope concerts, amateur plays and concerts, with occasional tableaux etc., afforded enjoyable entertainment. Dances in Hales' Hall and at various residences also had a good following and surprise parties were popular. In summer time boating picnics or gipsy teas, as they were called, were much appreciated and very enjoyable pastime. Oysters were very plentiful and easily obtained. Public holidays saw crowds of picnickers brought to Oatley by special trains, for Oatley Bay was a favourite picnic resort and a very interesting and pretty spot it was, too. Harry Linnark's Boatshed did a thriving business on such occasions. Even Chinese New Year celebrations and Salvation Army picnics were a regular feature. At one time two pleasure steamers ran from Lady Robinson's Beach (Brighton-le-Sands of to-day) up the river to Parkesvale, calling in at Como en route. It was a pleasant and interesting trip.

Early in 1902, a debating club was formed under the high-sounding title of "Mortdale Literary and Debating Society", and out of it sprang a cricket club - the first, by the way - and we played in the St. George District Competition during the 1902-03 season. We sought and obtained permission from Mr Percy Judd to put down a concrete pitch in the brickwork's paddock and the matches played drew fair attendances and added some variety to the usual Saturday afternoon pleasures.

Among the first buildings to be erected on the newly cut up Mort's Estate was a shop by Mrs Hales in Pitt Street, somewhere about where the Post Office is now located and further along the street she erected a hall where many a pleasant function was held. This hall still stands, though a front has been built on to it, and is now Costello's Hardware and Grocery Store.

The nearest doctor - Dr McLeod - lived at Hurstville, and the nearest police station was Newtown. The local limb of the law was Constable Guess, who lived in Victoria Avenue. For a long time bread, meat and groceries were delivered from Hurstville - Fred Mumford was the baker; Tom Hillard, the butcher; and C.A.Morgan, the grocer. Sing Hop, with his horse and van, and Ah See, with his baskets on the bamboo carrying stick, provided fruit and vegetables. Syrian hawkers, with their drapery packs were almost a pest. Charles Barsby established a drapery and mercery business in Hurstville, and travelled the district with a light vehicle and that settled the Syrians. Milk was supplied by a local dairyman (Mr Gorman), and the run was usually done by his children carrying cans. A very essential service was rendered by a quiet, unassuming dear old lady - Mrs Kemp - who was the local midwife. No doubt there are quite a few persons still living hereabouts who were ushered into the world by this good lady. My second sister is one of three and has the

distinction of being the first child born at Oatley.

Mumford's residence and bakery were - and still are - at the corner of Bridge and Forest Roads. Hillard's butchery was - and still is - on the opposite corner. Before erecting the existing shops, he had the old style open-front shop with large cutting block. He made his deliveries from a cutting cart. Morgan's grocery store is now the Hurstville Bedding Store, and Barsby's drapery was two doors from it.

Originally there were only 2 hotels, both at Hurstville - the Blue Post Inn and the Hurstville Hotel. The former received its name from a blue hitching post which stood in front, and was opposite the Public School. Its site is now occupied by a block of flats. Hurstville Hotel still stands, though in a very modernised form. About 1900 a hotel was built in Victoria Avenue, and was the first in the immediate locality. The building now accommodates the Police Boys' Club.

The brickworks, which came into existence in 1884, was the only industry in the area for many years and is still in a thriving condition. Prior to that a small brickpit existed on the site now taken up by the Memorial Park, Mortdale. The bricks were hand-made and very soft and porous and, naturally, could not compare with the machine-made article, so this little pit closed down.

These notes have been written mainly from memory, but where it has been possible to obtain confirmatory details, I have done so. In this regard I wish to record my grateful thanks to the Mitchell Library, the Railway Department and the Manager of the Brickworks, and I am very appreciative of the courteous manner in which they dealt with my requests.

Extract from: *The Sydney Times, October 13th, 1858.*

Shameful Obstruction of Public Thoroughfare:

"Yesterday evening at the time when the crossing of George and King Streets was very much crowded, a cab and a dray came into collision. The drivers became incensed against each other and when they got clear, instead of moving off in their different directions, they again ran their vehicles against each other.

This they repeated three times, flogging each other with their whips, and swearing furiously all the time. The belligerents at length rushed to the police station to give each other in charge."

Extract from: *Empire Weekly, May 10th 1901.*

Brisbane, Thursday.

"Another case of Bubonic Plague has been reported in Brisbane. A gentleman named Howlett, employed in the Royal Hotel, Brisbane, has been pronounced to be suffering from the diabolical affliction."

"The Countess of Hopetoun displayed much refinement in her gown of black satin, with which she wore a diamond necklace, ornaments and a diamond tiara."

Extract from: "The Miners' Standard and Gold Fields Advocate"

December 4th, 1854.

SYDNEY INFIRMARY.

"Tenders are requested for the supply of the undermentioned articles of consumption for the use of the infirmary from 1st January 1855:

Bread, Flour, Meat, Milk, Coals and Coffins.

These articles must be of good quality and delivered as required".

A Favourite with all Stock Raisers.

Cob's Healing Oil - It cures -

Rheumatism, Lumbago, Lame Back, Neuralgia, Diptheria, Coughs, Colds, Piles, Croup, Burns, Asthma, Chillblains, Corns, Toothache, Earache, Headache, Bruises and Wounds of every description on Man or Beast.

For sale by Chemists and Medicine Dealers. 1s. 3d.

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BENJAMIN LAZARUS & CO. King Street, Sydney.

Men's Clothing:

	s.	d.		s.	d.
Coats - linen	2.	6	to	10.	6
Coats - cloth	10.	6	"	1.12.	6
Waistcoat's - quilting	3.	6	"	10.	6
Waistcoats - cloth	7.	6	"	12.	6
Trousers - drill	8.	6	"	14.	6
Trousers - cloth	7.	6	"	17.	6

- List of prices

Dec. 4th - 1854.
