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PRICE 5 c.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Registered for Posting as
a Publication Category B.

24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.
December 1979.

Dear Friend & Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, December 21st, 1979, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item. As this will be our Christmas Meeting, it was decided to have a very short business meeting, to be followed by our Christmas Party & "Get Together", which should appeal to all present.

SPECIAL: Peter Sage Presents in January.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Lee, Captain, and all Ladies Please.

This is a very fitting opportunity to say "Thank you" to all of our wonderful Ladies for their help and co-operation throughout the year.

Ladies: Your "Plate" for this festive occasion will excell all other "Plates". Thank you ladies.

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.
Phone 599.4884

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

Three essentials for happiness: Something to do, something to love, something to hope for. Friendship Book, 1974.

The President and Officers wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year. 1979-1980.

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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.

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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. No. 8 Book was compiled by Mrs. Bronwyn Perkins.

- 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).
- No. 8. "Early Churches of the St. George District."

NEW PUBLICATION. We are proud to announce the publication of another Book - No. 8 -- in our series titled - "Early Churches of the St. George District", (but by no means a complete coverage of all The early Churches).

This book was compiled by Bronwyn Perkins, from Articles selected from the St. George Historical Society Bulletins, all of which have been written and presented by different members over a period of time.

All books are now available at a cost of \$1.00 per copy - plus current rate of postage.

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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Society Badges are available from Mrs. Wright, Treasurer, at \$1.00 each.

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NEWS FROM ADELAIDE.

Mr. & Mrs. Arthur Coghlan, two of our very early members who joined the Society in the early 1960's, have moved to Kensington in South Australia. Mr. & Mrs. Coghlan were regular attendants at the meetings and they will be greatly missed. The front seats -- which they always occupied -- will not seem the same. Best wishes to you both from all of us.

SOCIAL.Special Note:

October 4th, 5th and 6th, 1980, (long weekend) - Coach trip to Wagga Wagga and Districts.

Deposit \$10.00 at January meeting.

Waiting list only. See Mrs. Wright for further details.

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. A Restoring Tour of Old Government House.

. Exciting - and let the purists wince!

- With Ursula O'Connor
Sydney Morning Herald
7th March 1970.

Imagine one of the finest examples of colonial architecture in Australia, the seat of Governors in a city which was the birthplace of the nation ... a boarding house, and the home of a boys' school, fitted with rows of lavatories, cloakroom pegs and serveries.

The treatment meted out to Old Government House at Parramatta, since the present Government House was completed in 1845, has been far from respectful. But things will be different.

The dark ages of the graceful old house came to an end in 1967, when the Commonwealth Bank of Australia gave \$50,000 for its restoration, and State Government transferred it from the keeping of the trustees of the Parramatta National Park, who had cared for it for 109 years, to the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.).

Three years and a big overdraft later, Old Government House is beginning to look much as it must have done in the days when it was a Vice-Regal residence to five of our early governors.

Some of the preliminary work on the structures was made easier by an excellent Government restoration in 1909. Preparing the house for renovation was more a matter of ripping out the fixtures that had been put in for the King's School, than of rebuilding.

But there were the resident white ants. The lower 5,000 square feet of timber flooring had to be replaced, together with a few crumbling sandstock bricks.

It was in this stage of renovations that the work became something of an architectural whodunit.

Prowlers about the house at present can see, in one room, the ground dug right through to the foundations of light red clay, with a large, age-hardened tree trunk firmly embedded among them.

The Trust's honorary architect, Mr Leslie J Buckland, believes these to be the remains of foundations laid by Governor Phillip when he built on the site in 1790. These are probably the oldest building materials yet found in Australia.

The next piece of excitement for history lovers and architects was the discovery that it was the front part of the house which was the older. It was built, it is now known, by Governor Hunter in 1799, and not, as was assumed by Macquarie.

In 1815, Macquarie added the back section of the house, almost a

facsimile of the front, plus two wings. He also commissioned Francis Greenway to design the elegant portico which adorns the front entrance.

In restoring the interior of the house, the restoration committee has concentrated on the period 1790-1850. They have aimed at, and achieved a very honest restoration, greatly helped by the fact that Old Government House is probably one of the most fully-documented historic buildings in Australia.

Architect's records, and inventories of furnishings still available date back to 1815. The colours of the paints used at the time are also known, but there is no record of the wallpapers used at the house.

When I visited the house, it was a scene of industry and excitement.

In the gardens at the front, gardeners were busy transforming rough grass into a 19th century garden.

Behind the house, between it and the small garrison building workmen had obliterated all signs of the school tennis courts, and were laying a paved courtyard.

Inside the house members of the restoration committee were meeting a large crowd of young housewives from the surrounding districts who will act as voluntary guardians of the house and staff it when it is open to the public.

Here and there, in parts of rooms, furniture and small period pieces had been laid out in what will be their permanent positions. The rest of the house was like a huge antique shop.

The committee had at first hoped that it would be possible to recover some of the furniture which was used by the governors at the house.

Despite careful inquiries in Australia and in England, they have recovered almost nothing they can be sure of. One piece which might have belonged to the house is a cedarwood serving table, circa 1850. This was given by Mrs D.W.Lemerle, and was bought by her grandmother at an auction in Parramatta. It was reputed to have been owned by the family of Governor Fitzroy, last of the governors to use the house as a residence.

Apart from the gloriously solid and rich-looking colonial furniture which the Trust has collected for the house, they have also been given several valuable pieces by individuals interested in its past and future.

A particularly interesting group of objects is set in one of the large light rooms almost completed. They are a pair of early Regency globes, one celestial, one terrestrial. They flank one of the original cedar fireplaces which were found in perfect condition under coats of paint and varnish throughout the house.

Above the mantelshelf is set a portrait of the young Maria King, wife of Governor King (1800-1806).

The globes and the portrait were given by Mrs F Penfold Hyland, who has a special interest in Old Government House because her great-grandmother, Mrs Robert Copland Lethbridge was a daughter of King.

A waterset jug and two goblets was given by Mrs John Pockley. The pieces are delicately hand etched with classical figures by the inventor of etching on glass, the Englishman Benjamin Richardson (early 19th century).

Among other gifts were a chandelier of Waterford crystal, valuable long-case clock and a delicate porcelain tea-set.

The lower rooms will be furnished and laid out as nearly as possible in the way they were lived in; some upper rooms and corridor will become a museum of the governors. There will be portraits of each of them, with some of their personal belongings, records of the time, and an attempt to show the character and achievements of each.

The garrison building at the back, which is rather like a long, low cottage, will become a shop and possibly tea-rooms. For the shop, the Trust is having copies made of old colonial souvenir mugs, of paintings from the National Library, of early Georgian spoons. If, as the Trust hopes, a bookseller's licence can be had, the shop could become a store of Australiana.

Purists will wince at the idea of the tea-rooms and the shop. But the restorations when completed are expected to cost \$250,000 despite the hours of time freely given by the three architects. The first stage of restoration, not including the garrison, is expected to cost \$200.00.

The Queen will open the House on April 30. After that, one of Australia's oldest, and now best preserved historic buildings, will be open to the public, and, with luck, to hordes of tourists who will help to pay for it.

Old Government House is open for inspection on a regular basis. A 'phone call to the National Trust will give the times. It is easily accessible by car, but if travelling to Parramatta by public transport, it is only a short taxi ride from the station, with an easy downhill walk back to the railway.

ALL FOR THE PRICE OF A DOG LICENCE ...

75 years ago tomorrow ...

- *Sydney Morning Herald.*
8th May 1976.

The whole Empire was still in mourning for Queen Victoria when her grandson, the Duke of Cornwall & York, opened the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, on May 9, 1901 - 75 years ago tomorrow.

The Duke (later King George V) wore a cocked hat & Admiral's uniform when he stood on the dais of Melbourne's Exhibition Hall & made his "long speech" (10 minutes) to 14,000 people. The address contained a "Royal message" from King Edward VII, in whose name & on whose behalf the Duke declared Parliament open.

Silken Union Jacks formed canopies in the Exhibition Hall. Gilt crowns surmounted enamelled poles; there were a dado in royal blue velvet & a frieze of white enamel moulding panelled with gold satin. "Living flowers & ferns" made banks of greenery.

But the old Queen had died less than four months before. Everyone was in mourning dress. As the Herald wrote: "From the floor to the tops of the galleries the people showed a mass of black. State Governors & gentlemen of the party wore court dress or military uniform with black bands on the left arm. The ladies were, without exception, in deep black the only relief being in the use of white boas & muffs."

The Duke's speech sounded a funereal note when he told the huge crowd how his "beloved and deeply lamented grandmother" had "desired to mark the importance of the opening of this, the first Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia & to manifest her special interest in all that concerns the welfare of her loyal subjects in Australia by granting to me a special commission to open the first session. The commission had been duly signed before the sad event which has plunged the whole Empire into mourning." He told the gathering that His Majesty (King Edward VII) prayed that "this union, so happily achieved, may prove an instrument for still further promoting the welfare & advancement of his subjects in Australia & for the strengthening & consolidation of his Empire."

The Duke read a cablegram from the King, who wished Australia "prosperity & great happiness." Then the Governor-General, Lord Hopetoun, led the cheering, cannon boomed in salute & members of the Senate & of the House of Representatives swore an oath of allegiance. Mr E Barton was "the Australian Premier". The House of Representatives had 42 "Ministerialists" to 32 "Oppositionists."

Melbourne was the temporary capital of the Commonwealth from 1901 to 1927 & the Victorian House of Parliament was "lent" for that period to the Commonwealth.

In the article below, *John Kenny* recaptures the spirit of the times.

FEDERATION, it was confidently predicted 75 years ago, would cost no more than the price of a dog licence per head of population.

No wonder poetry proliferated to welcome such a political benefaction, because only the muse, it seemed, could express the rapture of the occasion. J. Brunton Stephens wrote - *Fullfilment-Australia Federata*, & by special permission dedicated it to Her Most Gracious Majesty, Queen Victoria:

*... no vassal progeny of subject brood,
no satellite shed from Britain's plenitude,
but orb'd with her in one wide sphere of good.*

Her Majesty lived to see Australia Federata, but died in January 1901 - before the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament.

George Essex Evans, Queensland's minstrel, won the 50 guineas prize offered by the N.S.W. Govt. for a Commonwealth Day ode:

*Freeborn of nations, virgin white, not won by blood,
nor ringed with steel,
Thy throne is on a loftier height, deep-rooted in
the Commonwealth.*

Sydney had an orgy of celebrations - eight days of events & nights of illuminations. A procession of 99 floats & 21 bands passed through dozens of triumphal arches from the Domain to Centennial Park on January 1, 1901, for the formal proclamation of the federation of the Australian colonies.

In the evening the N.S.W. Govt., was host at a national banquet in the Town Hall. The Governor-General, the Earl of Hopetoun, was to have been guest of honour, but the former colonials' euphoria had been too much for him. He sent a note of apology: "I am so thoroughly tired out with my day's work as to be unfit to attend the State banquet this evening." Lord Hopetoun may also have had forebodings about his future in his office, for he was the first victim of the Federal parsimony now so familiar to the States. When refused an entertainment allowance, he asked to be recalled to London & did not complete his term. Nevertheless, the banquet hosts pressed on. The N.S.W. Premier, Sir William Lyne, said alterations to the Constitution must be for the extension of federation, not its restriction. The Prime Minister, Edmund Barton, said: "If divided, we cannot reap the whole benefits of the union."

This was echoed when the new Parliament was opened. The Sydney Mail expressed the general sentiment when it wrote: "It is the final & culminating point of that movement towards federation which for some years past has occupied the attention of the Australian public.."

Before federation, the States thought they were on to such a good thing that they believed the Federal Govt. would not know what to do with its

surplus revenue from customs duties. In their innocence they foresaw federation achieving strength for defence without creating a central despotism, as a protector of the rights of minorities against the tyranny of the majority and as a single voice for Australia in the councils of the Empire. The Senate, the States' house, was to be their shield against encroachment.

By 1902 Alfred Deakin, Federal Attorney-General, was having realistic insights. He said: "The rights of self-government by the States have been fondly supposed to be safeguarded by the Constitution. It has left them legally free but financially bound to the chariot wheels of the central government. Their needs will be its opportunity."

Relations between the States & the Commonwealth were cosy enough for the first 10 years because the Constitution guaranteed the States 3/4 of the Federal revenue for that period.

The financial wrangling that has never ceased began in 1910 when the guarantee ended. Deakin, then Prime Minister, initiated a referendum to amend the Constitution so that it would guarantee the States 25/- per head of population - it was then 4,425,000 - from Federal revenue. The voters rejected the proposal. Why? Because the centralists did not wish to see the Federal Govt., so firmly bound & the State-righters thought they would not be getting enough.

Notwithstanding this result, the Federal Govt. legislated to pay the per capita grant, but the Constitution didn't guarantee it, a situation that made the States the mendicants they have been, more or less, ever since.

Fulfilment of Deakin's prophecy was not long delayed. World War I costs were the opportunity for the Federal Govt. to begin exercising its financial muscle. For the first time, it taxed incomes & thus intruded upon the States' main source of revenue.

In the '20's it was strong enough to extricate the States from a financial mess, resulting from their profligate borrowing, by taking over & guaranteeing their debts. The costs of World War II provided its opportunity to finally find the States to its chariot wheels by taking over all income tax.

When after the war the States' complaints about their share of income-tax revenue became intolerable to Sir Robert Menzies, he offered to return their tax powers to them, but none wanted the odium of imposing & collecting income tax.

In nearly 75 years, 658 members of the House of Representatives & 324 Senators have entrenched the Federal power with an accelerating rate of legislation - 847 Acts in the first 25 years, 1,727 in the second 25 years, and 2,817 to the end of 1974 (including the only double century, 221, in 1973); in all, 5,391 Acts (1975 excluded).

And the per capita cost of a dog licence today? In Federal expenditure in '74-75 it was \$1,300. Anyone for the pound?
