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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c.

# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,  
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.  
February 1980.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, February 15th, 1980.  
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.  
Business: General.

Syllabus Item: "The Squatting Age" in Australia, by William Foster, M.A.,  
Fellow of the Royal Australian Historical Society.

"The position whereby Australia, starting from nothing, became  
the greatest Sheep producing Country in the world, is indeed a  
remarkable story of conflicts and great human endeavour."

Supper Roster: Miss Dorothy Row, Captain, with Mrs. Jean Welch &  
Mrs. Lorna Kell.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. A. Ellis,  
President.  
Phone 587.1159.

Mrs. B. Perkins,  
Publicity Officer.  
Phone 587.9164

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

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

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

"A fish meets its doom by opening its mouth too wide."

..... Andorran Proverb.

(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. We are pleased to know Miss G. Frost and Miss A. Cowling are well again.

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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."

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 - Secretary. 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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(3)

SOCIAL.

The following social outings are being arranged for your pleasure by Mrs. Wright.

Date: 1/3/1980. Visit to Gledswood and inspection of the lovely old home, once the property of the Hordern Family.

Picnic Lunch, then on to Camden, Cobbity and Campbelltown, returning approximately 5.00 p.m.

Meeting Place. Corner Walz and Railway Streets, Rockdale.  
(Western side of Rockdale Railway Station).

Time: 8.30 A.M. SHARP.

Cost: Coach - \$3.30, plus \$1.50 Inspection of Home.

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Date: 22/3/1980. Guided Tour of Sydney University, Afternoon Tea at Opera House.

Meeting Place. As above, leave Rockdale 1.00 p.m. Sharp.

Cost: Coach \$2.20 - Inspection \$1.50.

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Date: 19-20/4/1980. (Weekend Tour) Nelsons, Shoal & Fingal Bays respectively. Also Launch River Trip with lunch on board, included in cost.

Meeting Place. As above, Leave Rockdale 7.30 a.m. Sharp, return approx. 6.30 p.m. Sunday.

Cost: \$60.00 all inclusive.

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24/5/1980. Coach Tour, afternoon, Balmain and Glebe.  
Details later.

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2/8/1980. Berry Camelia Show & Market Day.  
Details later.

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October 4th, 5th, & 6th, 1980. (Long Weekend). Coach Trip to Wagga Wagga and Districts.

For further details and bookings, please ring Mrs. Wright, 599.4884.  
Also at February Meeting.

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THE BEXLEY LADIES' COLLEGE.

- Miss Frances Stacey  
- September 1979.

"Rockdale College" was originally founded by the Rev. C.T.Forscutt, when he was 40 years old. He was born in Newtown and became a preacher at the Enmore Tabernacle for some years. Later at the age of 40 years, he decided he would found a Boys' School and was greatly encouraged by the late Dr Prescott of Newington College at Stanmore, who was his life-long friend. He acquired three cottages in Henry Street, somewhere between Sydenham and Tempe, overlooking the railway line on the left, going towards Rockdale. I believe these cottages to be still there - one or two turnings to the right after leaving Sydenham Station and moving towards Tempe. He started his school with forty boys. After some years there, and the school increasing in numbers, Rev.Forscutt bought a fine property in Bexley, in about 1880. It is thought the home was built by Mr Tidswell, who was I think, at that time, a Wine and Spirit Merchant.

The land was bounded by Gladstone Street, Queen Victoria Street and Monomeeth Street. In Gladstone Street, it adjoined another lovely old home built and occupied by another Tidswell family for many years. Later this property was bought by Mr George Hudson of the Timber Mill Business. This home finally became "Margaret House" and used for entertainments. Also adjoining was the large residence in Dunmore Street built by Mr Conley. It still stands there as Fairmont Hospital and is the only one of the old homes to be still standing.

The School stood in fourteen acres of land all told and a photograph of the old home may be seen in Lydham Hall. In the College Prospectus it was quoted as "standing in its beautiful park-like grounds overlooking Botany Bay." The view must have been very lovely then!

A school hospital was built near the lower end of what was called the A.E.Watsons Reserve and on the Monomeeth Street side where the old stone stables were situated. Here were housed the horse-drawn coaches and horses all cared for by "Charly" who always had his "hand bitten". He was never without a smile to us all and we all loved him. He once allowed me to climb up on to one of the carriages! Harry Humphrey attended to all the outside work in the garden and his wife Agnes did the house-keeping. All were kind and gentle.

The large grounds were sheltered by pine trees where the children could play. They also had a big see-saw and swings.

As the school grew in numbers, Mr Foscutt built a large building in Monomeeth Street. The ground floor was a very large school room, built with a stage at one end for concerts etc. On one side was a hall with a music room and sitting room, the other with a large hall leading to the front door. On the other side was a verandah looking right down to Gladstone Street and the old home. Upstairs were all the boarders bedrooms.

I can remember one morning so clearly when we had a bad thunderstorm. One of the chimneys was struck by lightning. It was so frightening and I saw Mr Forscutt stagger backwards hold his hand to his forehead, and also one of the teachers with my class right under the window on that side. I picked up a piece of that chimney and kept it for many years with my own geological specimens, but can find it nowhere now! Should I ever find this it will go to "Lydham Hall".

Many readers may be interested to know that when in later years the old stables were demolished, the bricks which I imagine were standstone, were used by Mr Forscutt to build cottages near the railway at Banksia. The old stables were built to the design of an English barn.

The front verandah of the building in Monomeeth Street was built with a beautiful arch, believed to have been a replica of the arch at the Marist Brothers at Kogarah.

In the early years of the College, a Garden Party was held "in the park-like grounds" each year. Members of Parliament and many other notable people also were invited - most in those days coming by train. Rockdale Station was beautifully decorated for the occasion with bunting. James Cook - the local member of Parliament at that time - always attended. At that time the school was a "Boys' School" and it was quite some time before it was to become a "Girls' School".

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OCTOBER WEEK-END TRIP FOR 1979.

- St. George Historical Society

- *Ralph Dunsmore.*

On Saturday, 29th September, forty-eight of us left Rockdale in a V.I.P. Coach bound for Tamworth and Armidale. It was a comfortable Coach and our Driver was Jim Garvie, who took us to Port Macquarie last year. He is a good driver.

We left at 7.30 and headed down the Highway, through the City, over the Harbour Bridge and on towards Hornsby. The day was mild and a little overcast and was quite pleasant for travelling.

At Peats Ridge we stopped for morning tea, then on to Wyong, passing the Burbank Nurseries at Tuggerah, where there was a magnificent display of azaleas. This spot is also noted for Bellbirds. Leaving the Highway at Wyee we travelled via Toronto to Hexham where we had lunch at the Oaks.

After lunch we travelled to Maitland and Singleton through the rich dairy country from where a lot of Sydney's milk supply comes. Approaching Singleton we saw a large old mansion about 3/4 mile from the road. Nobody seemed to know much about it, but we thought it would be one of Henry Dangar's early homes. I rang the National Trust and they informed me it would be "Neatsfield" one of the three Dangar's homes that they have listed in the District. The others are "Weerona" and "Minimbah".

Leaving Singleton we passed on to Ravensworth where we saw some of the open-cut mines which supply coal for Liddle Power Station. Some of the mines are as much as 250 feet deep. The coal is conveyed on conveyor belts to the Power Station and empties straight into the hoppers. There are over 11 miles of conveyor belts, which are enclosed in galvanised iron. They look like a long pipeline extending across the country. Liddell is our largest Thermal Power Station though others are almost as big and some are designed to expand, giving a greater output than Liddell. We passed the Power Station and the associated Lake which was formed to supply the huge amount of water required to run the plant.

Muswellbrook was the next town of importance. It is a pretty little town in the midst of farming and grazing country -- sheep and cattle predominate, with some wine growing. The spelling was changed in 1949 from MUSCLEBROOK to MUSWELLBROOK. From here to Scone the country is rather hilly and there are quite a few cattle studs. Scone is recognised as being some of our best horse-breeding country and there are a lot of Thoroughbred Studs. The country was generally very green and they are enjoying a good season.

We saw the Burning Mountain at Wingen which was about 1 1/2 miles from the road. It is a coal seam that has been burning for over 1000 years and the smoke rises from the mountain, which is in private property.

We now started to climb the Liverpool Range to Murrurundi, the road becoming very steep.. By-passing Quirindi and Werris Creek at Willow Tree we went on to Tamworth. It was raining now and visibility was rather poor. We arrived at Tamworth about 5 o'clock and stopped at the American Motel (Zebra). Our rooms were very comfortable and the evening meal was excellent.

Next morning we were all up bright and early and after a very good breakfast we were ready to board the Coach by 8.30a.m. Mrs Wright had been in touch with a Mrs King and Mr Scholes of the Tamworth Historical Society and they invited us to "Calala" which they opened especially for us. They were very nice and went out of their way to give us a good deal of information on Tamworth History. John Oxley passed through the Peel Valley in 1818 on his trip - Bathurst to Port Macquarie. He gave a glowing report of the country which led to an influx of squatters. By the 1830's the town started as a collection of slab and bark huts. It was proclaimed a Municipality in 1876 and became a City in 1946.

The early history of Tamworth is interwoven with the Australian Agricultural Co., which was formed in England in 1824, the idea was that for pounds 1,000,000 they were to be given 1,000,000 acres of land and supplied with convict labour. In return the Company undertook to colonise the country, looking after the convicts' welfare as regards health, education and well-being. Their first settlement was at Port Stephens, where they took up huge tracts of land which was found to be unsuitable for sheep. In 1834 on the recommendation of Henry Dangar they exchanged some of the Port Stephens Land for 313,298 acres in the Peel Valley, taking in the country from Attunga to Duri Peak across to Nundle and back to Attunga. "Goonoo Goonoo" which is about 17 miles South of Tamworth was the head station of the Australian Agricultural Co., the homestead being built in 1846. Gidley King who was Superintendent of the Peel River Land & Mineral Co. had "Calala" built as his Town House in 1875 and connected it to "Goonoo Goonoo" by telephone in 1897 -- this being the first telephone in Tamworth. "Calala" is held in Trust by the Tamworth Historical Society and is to them what "Lydham Hall" is to our Society.

It is a red brick building built on ground level, with a wide verandah across its front. It is set in well kept grounds, lawns and rose gardens, with several beautiful gum trees. (They have a brochure giving the names of the various roses growing). To one side is the original slab and bark hut built for a shepherd in 1849. It is in a very good state of preservation and is furnished with the original artifacts - home made beds, open fireplace, with camp ovens etc. On the other side of the block

the stables and coach house have been re-built with round natural timber and will be opened to the public soon.

The rooms in the house are all furnished with pieces used in those days. The main bedroom has a four-poster brass bedstead fitted with a canopy and hand-made curtains and quilt. The ladies were very interested in the water set on the washstand. Instead of the usual water jug, it is shaped like a cask on a swivel, the top being open. It was made of blue and white china, and I believe there are only 3 or 4 others like it in the world.

Tamworth to-day is a flourishing city with a population of over 30,000, situated on the Peel River and nestling in a basin surrounded by the Moonbi Range. After thanking Mr. Scholes and Mrs King we left for Armidale, stopping at Bendemeer for morning tea. We passed through Kootingal and Moonbi, where poultry farming and pig raising is carried on on a large scale, and lucerne growing on the very rich river flats.

We arrived at Armidale for lunch. Armidale is situated on the Dumaresq Creek about 362 miles North of Sydney, founded by Commissioner McDonald in 1839, and became a Municipality in 1863, being proclaimed a City in 1885. Commissioner McDonald named it after his Uncle's Castle in the Isle of Skye. To-day it has a population of 21,000 and is called the Education Centre, or the Oxford-Cambridge of Australia, having many schools, both private and public, including the Teachers' College, Technical College, College of Advanced Education, the University of New England, etc.

After lunch we had a tour of the City, saw St. Mary's and St. Peter's Cathedrals and made our way to the New England University, which is about 3 miles from the City. The University was established in 1938 as a University College of the University of Sydney and became autonomous in 1954. The original building was a fine old mansion called "Booloominbah" and was given to the University by Mr. T.R. Foster. It is set in lovely lawns and surroundings and to-day houses the Administration offices. It was closed, but looking through the glass doors we could see a beautiful stained glass window on the first landing of the staircase. It was a teacher and children -- depicting education. The buildings housing the various faculties were numerous and were terraced on the hillsides amongst the beautiful trees.

Leaving Armidale we made our way back through Uralla, passing Thunderbolt's rock and his grave.

The country was very green and we saw plenty of ewes and lambs. We also saw evidence of the Die-back of the eucalypts, which is causing a lot of concern and has been written up a lot in the papers lately. We arrived back at the Motel a little after 5 o'clock, after a very enjoyable day.



Next morning was mild and the sun was shining, portending a nice day. We were all up early and embarked at 8 o'clock. Heading down the New England Highway we saw the country that was obscured by rain and mist on our forward journey, it was nice and green and crops looked well. We passed "Goonoo Goonoo" and could see the buildings in the distance. Coming down the Liverpool Range we had some magnificent views of the valley below. Leaving Scone we turned off the Highway and made our way to Glenbawn Dam, passing through beautiful open grazing country and some very good crops. The Turranga Horse Stud looked lovely with the white rails of the fences and yards and lovely Homestead. Crossing the Page's River we came to the Dam.

The Glenbawn Dam 8 miles from Scone was completed in 1958. Situated in the upper reaches of the Hunter River, it is designed to supply water for irrigation and storage for flood mitigation. There was a lovely view of the valley from the Dam wall. The grounds and surrounds were well laid out, making it a very popular picnic resort.

We went down the valley to Aberdeen, passing through very rich and fertile lucerne and cropping country, also several horse studs and nearer Aberdeen several large dairies with their Friesian cows. We were now back on the New England Highway, which we left again at Branxton and made our way to Dalwood, to Wyndham Estate where we had a barbecue lunch and wine tasting. Wyndham was the first commercial winery in the district and was established by George Wyndham in 1826. We saw the remains of the old stone Homestead built in 1827. After lunch we left for home via Wollombi and the old North Road to Peats Ridge, passing through the main wine growing areas, Lindemans and others.

Wollombi is an old-time village in a very lovely rural setting. It has a lot of historical buildings which have been described in previous bulletins. As we passed through there were lots of cars and people and there seemed to be plenty of sporting and picnic activities going on. Leaving Wollimbi we wound our way through the hills to Laguna and on to Peats Ridge. It was a very winding road and quite pleasant with not too much traffic.

We had a late afternoon at Peats Ridge and set out on our last stage for home about 5.30p.m. We saw a lovely sunset and arrived at Rockdale at 8 o'clock after a very enjoyable week-end, thanks to Mrs Wright's effort, and I am sure that we are all looking forward to another trip next year.

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