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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.
June 1980.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, June 20th, 1980, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Mr. Paul Faulds will present a Film Screening from Telecom Australia on: "Communications in Australia". This evening should be of interest to all, something we have not had before.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Kell, Captain, & Mrs. Welch and Miss Row.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President.
Phone 587.1159.

Mrs. E. Eardley,
Secretary & Bulletin Editor.
Phone 59.8078.

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

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

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

"Those who love the sound of their own voices, seldom say anything worth listening to."

..... Friendship Book
1971.

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

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 now available at $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.

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

SOCIAL.

Berry-Camellia Show & Market Day.

Date: 9/8/80.
Meeting Place: Western side of Rockdale Station.
Time: 8.30 a.m. sharp.
Cost: $4.50 per person.
..... Further details later.

Hammond Park's Golden Performing Horses, Tumbi Umbi.

Date: Thursday, 4th September, 1980.
Meeting Place: Rockdale Town Hall. 9 a.m.
Show commences at 1 p.m.
Coach Fare .. $3.50.
Admission .. $3.50.

..... Further particulars at next meeting.

Coach Trip to Wagga Wagga & Districts.

October 4, 5 & 6, 1980. (Long Weekend).

See Mrs. Wright for bookings & further details.

FATE OF THE SYDNEY TRIBES.

- *Sydney Morning Herald*
29th September 1979

Taken from - *The Destruction of the Tribes of the Sydney Region - 1788-1850s - When the Sky Fell Down by Keith Willey (c) 1979.*

When Captain James Cook landed on the east coast of Australia, what is now known as the Greater Metropolitan Area of Sydney was the permanent home of seven tribes of Aborigines.

Eight years later those tribes were still there, living off fish, waterfowl, lilies and game. Eighty years later they were dead.

The intervening years were of disease, decline and death - for the tribes of the Sydney region the sky had fallen.

When the white men of the First Fleet set foot on the shores of Port Jackson in 1788 it was clear to the Aborigines of the Sydney district what had happend. The sky had fallen.

These pale forms, which came from the east in ships and swarmed over the land, were dead blacks who had come back to life. For years the myths of the Aborigines had warned them that the prop, which held up the eastern extremity of the solid vault of the sky was rotting. With the arrival of the pale strangers it was obvious that the prop had given way. Unfortunately the myths were prophetic for the Port Jackson and Botany Bay tribes and within one lifespan they were dead.

The supernatural disaster had delivered a terrible blow to the Aborigines' spiritual heritage but the effects of starvation, disease, degradation and outright murder completed their destruction.

Before 1788 it was estimated that 1,500 blacks lived in the Sydney district. The Harbour and the rivers emptying into ti provided the hub of Aboriginal society. The sheltered waters were full of fish, the swamps full of wildfowl and inland there was bush game such as possums and kangaroo. The women harvested yams and lily bulbs and hunted for goannas, snakes and witchetty grubs. In summer there was plenty of food and in autumn there was feasting on sea mullet. In winter it was more difficult, fish were scarce and the people huddled about their fires, doing as little hunting as possible until the warmer weather returned.

The Aborigines lived off the land, indeed they were part of it, and changed nothing. By the time the white men came the tribes around Sydney had lost all racial memory of the great migration and believed they had always been there.

In a new book "When the Sky Fell Down", Keith Wiley sets out the tribes and their territories around Sydney.

A group remembered only as *"Eora" - the people,* wandered about Sydney Cove, from the present City area out to Watsons Bay.

On the northern shore, from the Lane Cover River to Middle Harbour, there was a tribe called *"Camaraigal"*, renowned for its warriors.

From Manly north were the *"Gayimai"* , to the west bordering on the Lane Cove River, the *"Walumeda"*. South from Port Jackson to Botany Bay was the country of the *"Cadigal"* with the *"Wangal"* immediately to the west and the *"Gwiyagal"* living off the swamps between Botany Bay and Port Hacking.

Inland the great *"Dharuk"* language group extended to the south bank of the Hawkesbury. Dharuk was spoken at Ryde, Parramatta and Penrith along the Georges River, and up into the foothills of the Blue Mountains.

For all these tribes the *"sky would fall and everybody would be killed."*

The impact of disease on the Aborigines, who had been isolated from Asia and the rest of the world for thousands of years was immediate and disastrous. In the year following the landing of the First Fleet, Captain John Hunter returned from the Cape of Good Hope with supplies and noted that not a single Aboriginal or canoe was in sight as he sailed up the Harbour. The reason for the absence was smallpox. Captain Hunter noted: *"As we had never yet seen any of these people who have been in the smallest degree marked with the smallpox, we had reason to suppose they have never before been affected by it."*

The settlers assumed from the attitudes of the corpses, that once an Aboriginal became ill his friends immediately deserted him. *"Some have been found sitting on their haunches, with their heads reclined between their knees; others were leaning against a rock, with their head resting upon it: I have seen myself, a woman sitting on the ground, with her knees drawn up to her shoulders, and her face resting on the sand between her feet."* Others were found with their children's bodies nearby. The disease spread along the coast and inland and that epidemic perhaps killed half the tribes around Port Jackson.

There was some argument as to whether the English had introduced smallpox. Some said it came with the French ships under La Perouse, but there was less argument about the introduction of venereal disease. Initially, Aboriginal women were objects of curiosity and lust, then ridicule and disgust. One of the few sympathetic and sensitive descriptions of the native women came from a prolific recorder of the early Sydney scene, Captain Watkin Tench.

Although not particularly taken with female Aboriginal beauty he described an 18-year-old Camaraigal girl called Gooreedeeana, reputed to be the most beautiful of the black women: *"Her countenance,*

though marked by some of the characteristics of her native land, was distinguished by a softness and sensibility, unequalled in the rest of her countrywomen. The interest I took in her led me to question her about her husband and family. She answered me by repeating a name, which I have now forgotten; and told me she had not children. I proceeded to examine her head, the part which the husband's vengeance generally alights - with grief I found it covered by contusions and mangled by scars." Gooreedeeana also walked with a limp because of a spear wound in her left thigh - the result of a recent abduction from her home.

Smallpox and venereal disease had weakened the tribes, hunting was more difficult because the game had been frightened away by the settlement and starvation began to take its toll on the tribes who could not move away from Sydney because of tribal boundaries. Low-key guerilla warfare carried out by warriors on the outskirts of the settlement was doomed because of the inequality of weapons. However, the settlers were impressed by the individual bravery and daring of many of the warriors, even in the face of muskets and pistols. In the earliest days of the colony the English and the French, who had built a stockade armed with two guns at Botany Bay, had fired on the Aborigines to *"chastise a spirit of rapine and intrusion."* Governor Phillip maintained that *"ill behaviour of some of the convicts"* may have been the cause of the hostilities. *"Their dislike of the Europeans is probably increased by discovering that they intend to remain among them and that they interfere with them in some of their best fishing places, which doubtless are, in their circumstances, objects of very great importance. Some of the convicts who have straggled into the woods have been killed, and others dangerously wounded by the natives, but there is great reason to suppose that in these cases the convicts have usually been the aggressors,"* he wrote.

In May, 1788 several convicts were murdered and attacked, including two rush cutters working on the Harbour shore. Attacks continued and intensified during the winter because the settlement centred on the Aborigines finest hunting grounds, which were the alternative food supply when fish became scarce. Although the Aborigines often stole food from the settlers, and were given fish on occasions, famine took hold in winter and weakened the tribes.

By 1790, famine and disease had so reduced the numbers of the tribes that Governor Phillip did not believe the Aborigines would ever attack a building or a number of men: *"Not that I think they want innate bravery - they certainly do not - but they are sensible of the great superiority of our arms ... it is seldom that any of them are now seen near the settlement."*

However, this situation changed in 1791 and the tribes of Port Jackson *"came in"* to the settlement and began to depend on the English for handouts of food and drink. At the same time the settlement was spreading into the lands of other tribes and the process of initial acceptance by the Aborigines, followed by resentment, and hostility, began to repeat itself.

But attacks against the settlers still relied on the initiative of individuals and small groups, the Aboriginal social structure did not lend itself to concerted action by several tribes. Warriors such as Pemulwy and his son, Tedbury, terrosied settlers around Parramatta, although the Hawkesbury River proved to be the centre of the most bitter and widespread fighting.

The whites wanted the fertile alluvial soil for their crops and the Aborigines wanted to retain the land by the river, their vital source of food. Atrocites against blacks, raids by Aborigines on farmhouses and crops, and 'expeditionary' parties marked the era up to 1805. Individual Aborigines were shot and killed to demonstrate the effectiveness of muskets and for sport. Eventually this superiority of weaponry and the destruction of natural food resources led to the stifling of all Aboriginal resistance.

Also English law differentiated between "*conquered*" and "*settled*" colonies. New South Wales was a settled colony and therefore it was judged as being "*desert and uninhabited*", the Aborigines' law was not recognised, and in effect, they were denied English law. Therefore the settlers were encouraged to take the law into their own hands or call in the military to do it for them. Thus Aborigines who maintained a traditional way of life were doomed, and so, by 1820, the majority were existing by begging.

Perhaps the best single illustration of the decline of the Sydney tribes is the story of *Mahroo Mahroot*, the last of the Sydney Aborigines. His testimony to the N.S.W. Legislative Council's Select Committee on Aborigines in 1845 represents one of the rare voices of the victimised tribes themselves. Mahroot was born near the Cook's River about 1796 and his evidence stands almost alone as an Aboriginal overview of the events which followed the arrival of the First Fleet.

"*The white's presence had drastically affected food gathering,*" Mahroot said, "*reducing the supply of fish because of the quantities netted. By 1845 you took all day to get one or two opossums, whereas when he was a little boy a hunter would gather within a week the 20 or 30 skins needed to make an opossum rug.*

"*Mahroot managed to support himself quite well. He rented out some of his land (given to him by Governor Bourke at Botany Bay) for a shilling a week. In a good week fishing might bring in as much as 4 or 6 pounds, with which he bought clothes, meat, flour and sugar and sometimes rum; although 'the way the fish is now' his earnings were scarcely four shillings. He had tried growing cabbages and pumpkins...'but the cows come and knock down the fence and destroy it when I am away fishing.'*

"*Mahroot sought to explain the failure of successive governors to make settlers of the Aborigines who had been accustomed to free wandering, hunting and gathering style of life. Asked whether other*

blacks would like to have a farm 'and grow cabbages and other things' he replied: 'The would not stop by it.' 'Would they like to work with the spade?' 'This would be for running off.. they like better to walk about.'

'He himself had gone on five or six whaling voyages, earning his 20 or 30 poun-s each time along with the white sailors. But other Aborigines would not follow his example, he said, 'because it is dirty work and hard work, and they do not fancy it at all.' Asked what he had done with the money he had earned at seas, Mahroot said: 'I went along with the sailors and we threw it away all together.' Dr. Lang then asked: 'In the publich hosues?' 'Yes, and then go for more again as soon as ever all that was out.'

"Mahroyt said he had a wife, who went fishing with him, but he had never had any children. 'Very few babies had been born to the Botany Bay women since they had taken to liquor and to obtaining it by going with a great many white men'. The sexual bias in favour of the invaders emerged when he was asked: 'Have any black men had a white woman for a wife?' - 'No.'

"Of his people generally, he said: 'They used to fight about the town, knock about like the deuce in liquor.' Getting drunk was the only thing that destroyed them. Although his own tribe was reduced to four people, about 50 Aborigines from other areas had settled at Botany Bay and Mahroot pleaded 'Boss, give him clothing of some kind to keep him away from town and stop at Botany.'

Twelve years after Mahroot gave his testimony, the last Aboriginal of the Sydney district was begging for coins on the South Head Road.

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HISTORICAL JOTTINGS -

THE SYDNEY HARBOUR BRIDGE, built at a cost of pounds6,000,000, is the largest arch-span bridge in the world, and is a monument to Australian skill and workmanship in the 1930's.

The total weight is 27,000 tons and the arch span is 1,600 feet in length with a rise of 350 feet at the centre of the lower cord at the crown while the highest point of the top cord is 440 feet. At high water the clearance is 171 feet.

The carrying capacity of the bridge is as follows:

> Four railway lines; roadway capable of carrying six lines of vehicular traffic; two 10 ft. walks, making a total width of 160 ft - the widest in the world.

The hourly capacity is 168 electric trams, 6,000 vehicles and 40,000 pedestrians.

AUSTRALIA'S FAMOUS SHOPPING ARCADES.

- Woman's Day - 22nd. March 1976.

- Nene King.

MELBOURNE: Royal Arcade.

It hasn't changed much the past 105 years. Those genial giants, God & Magog, are still there. So is the brooding figure of Father Time.

The ornate iron girders & fanlights still decorate the high dome-shaped glass roof. The narrow rickety stairs that lead up to T. Gaunt & Co's workshop & the recently closed Doll Hospital, creak loudly enough to be the original stairs.

This is the Royal Arcade which runs between Little Collins St & Bourke St in the heart of Melbourne's shopping area, one of the few buildings that has remained practically unchanged since opening day, May 2, 1870, when Mr Howard Spensley, a young English barrister & the first owner, hosted a champagne luncheon at tables set along the centre of the arcade.

Mr Spensley piously told the mayors of Melbourne & Adelaide & 300 other guests that there had not been a single case of intoxication among the workmen during the building of the Royal.

The Herald report of the opening said the building "having been prettily decorated with shrubs & miniature flags, presented an exceedingly animated & pleasing sight." "The variety of trades which have found here an abiding place, is considerable. Anyone wishing to 'furnish forth' the modern belle may here find the thing which is called by courtesy a hat for her head, down to those pretty little boots which make so many a heart ache."

The Royal Arcade was called a joint matrimonial venture for Mr. Spensley & his bride, Martha Tasmania Staughton, daughter of settler Simon Staughton, who had landed at Port Phillip with a wife & three small children in the spring of 1842.

Mr Spensley attached so much importance to the building of his arcade, on a site purchased for pounds 40.0.0 that a competition was conducted for designing it, with the understanding that accommodation had to be provided for a Mr Duncan & his Scotch Pie Shop (already on the site) & for adequate sanitary arrangements. And that cost was not to exceed pounds 10,000.0.0. This last proviso seems to have been waived, for the design by architect Charles Webb, which was finally chosen for construction by builder Thomas Newton, was closer to double this amount. It was considered very satisfactory that the building was completed in 11 months although the finished plumbing left a lot to be desired.

Mr William Catanach, now head of Catanach's, the jewellers, the last surviving family business (four generations) in the arcade, recalled,

"In those earlier days, the turkish baths, just across from us, had weak boilers. And every so often we were flooded out."

In 1889 Mr Spensley built the Royal Arcase annexe leading into Elizabeth Street. This still stands more or less in its original state.

For 42 years Mrs R McLean has run the family fur business from a small, well-lit shop in the annexe. She opened the shop at the end of the Depression "when the arcade was like the Black Hole of Calcutta. There were empty shops all around us," she added. "In those days I paid 30/- a week rent."

At one end of Mrs McLean's fur shop, is an "original" spiral staircase, that acress Vivien Leigh wanted to buy some years ago while in Melbourne. The stairs lead up to the storeroom on the first floor. "The only difference I notice these days about the Arcade," Mrs McLean said wistfully, "is that there are no nice hat shops now."

The Spensley/Staughton family held control of the Arcade until 1958 when a group of 35 tenants formed a company to buy the property. This company still controls the Arcade.

Today the Royal Arcade has more or less defied the passing of time & the atmosphere of the 19th century days still lingers despite the shopfronts having had facelifts. Though now-a-days it would be hard to find a fruit luncheon that costs 6d. or a tailor who makes a suit for pounds 5.0.0.

Mr Frank Atkinson, who started with Gaunts, the jewellers, the only original tenants left in the arcade, as an office boy 48 years ago, & now works in the firm's accounts department, remembered the days when a shirt ("You couldn't wear the damn thing out") with two detachable collars, cost 7/6. "And I will always remember how the children would stare, wide-eyed, at Gog & Magog."

The giant legendary figures have been beating out the quarter hours on the arcade's impressive large black & gold clock since 1892. Stories vary on their identity. But one fact is common to all. The figures were modelled on almost identical figures in the Guildhall, London, which in turn were copies of 14' high statues. The original statues were destroyed in the Great Fire of London in 1666, but copies were set up in the Guildhall in 1708. They were destroyed again by bombs in 1940 but new figures were carved in 1953.

The Royal Arcade's Gog & Magog, modelled of clear pine, are the charge of Ron Jones, the arcade's cleaner & relieving caretaker. "Every six months I take a ladder & vacuum down the statues & clean the accessible part of the roof." He is one of the relative newcomers to the Arcade, apart from the people who have opened fast food bars, T-shirt printing stands, & jewellery stalls.

"It doesn't matter if they are new faces or old faces. The Royal

Arcade people are always very nice," observed Mrs Freda Wilkins, one of the arcade's celebrities. Everyone knows her as "Mrs Scales", the pint-sized, cheery lady, who, for 17 years, has manned the large old Toledo-Berkel weight machine.

"I'm never bored. All the people I weigh are very nice. I receive so many cards at Christmas from people in Germany, Scotland, Canada & England. And the cards are always addressed to 'Mrs Scales, Royal Arcade, Melbourne'."

Mrs Scales is never without her flask full of Ovaltine. It's like "pneumonia alley" in the middle of winter. She boasts that her scales are always correct and 'my price has gone up only 2 cents in 17 years ... when I did raise my price half my customers cleared off..' Every day Mrs Wilkins washes her machine with disinfectant.

Mr Clary Thomson, has run the newspaper stand for 19 years; & Mrs Olga Ireland runs a gift shop, 'Temptation'. Clary's stand used to be an old-style birdcage booth. "I would poke my head out a side window."

The Royal Arcade's Doll Hospital closed its doors forever on Christmas Eve (1975) & Mr Wynne Dallaway retired. His family mended broken playthings for more than 60 years. Mr Dallaway's father moved to the Royal soon after the turn of the century. The worn brown lino stairs which led up to the Doll Hospital have seen a lot tears ... and smiles. "Little girls haven't changed over the years," he said.

Ron Jones is the Royal Arcade's cleaner & relieving caretaker. Every 6 months he gives Gog & Magog a thorough clean. In 16 years, he says, the only changes he's noticed are the fashions in the windows.

Mr William Catanach's grandfather arrived in Melbourne in 1875 & a few years later established a diamonds & gem stones business in the arcade. He has been in the arcade 50 years & the business is the last surviving family company. He still remembers the police strike of 1926. "There was rioting in Bourke St. We got the grilles closed just in time to lock out the rioters & looters."

Ywo full-time silversmiths work in the original work-shop above Gaunt's. One of them, George Turnbull, has been with Gaunt's for 20 years. When the store opened in 1870, 12 silversmiths were employed full-time.

Mr Frank Atkinson has worked for Gaunts, for 48 years. He misses Gaunt's old temperature gauge: "On hot days crowds would gather to watch it rise; when it reached 100 they let out wild cheers."
