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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



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# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,  
Arncliffe. 2205.  
July 1980.

Dear Friend and Member,

The ANNUAL MEETING will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, July 18th, 1980, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS. 1980 - 1981.

Syllabus Item: To be determined. As this will be the Annual Meeting &  
Election of Officers, the Syllabus Item will be something informal.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Jones, Captain, & Mesdames Wood, Murphy, McDougall,  
and Turner.

Mr. A. Ellis,  
President.  
Phone 587.1159

Mrs. B. Perkins,  
Publicity Officer.  
Phone 587.9164

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

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

Mr. A. Ellis,  
Research Officer  
Phone 587.1159.

"Let the other fellow talk, you may learn something."

..... Friendship Book 1970.

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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.

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.

Also available from the Secretary (59.8078) - "The Bundeena Book, illustrated. Price \$4.00 plus postage. Compiled by Mr. Les. Philpott, Published by the Bundeena Book Committee.

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

### SOCIAL.

Berry-Camellia Show & Market Day. Exhibition of Camellias, Azaleas, Floral Art, and Potted Plants.

Admission \$1.50 including afternoon tea. Proceeds in aid of "Chesalon".

Date: 2/8/80.

Meeting Place: Western side of Rockdale Station.

Time: 8.30 a.m. sharp.

Cost: \$4.50 per person.

..... Pay at July Meeting please.

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.

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New Book ..... "History of Bexley" 1822-1949, by R.W. Rathbone, now available.  
\$3.00 per copy.

MEMORIAL TO A RESCUE ...

- Catherine Harper
- The Sydney Morning Herald
- May 1st 1976.

In 1865 the wife of a prominent citizen of N.S.W. and four of their children were shipwrecked on their return to the colony from a visit to England. They were marooned off the coast of South America on a coral reef - and later rescued from it. Their miraculous escape appears to have been the original inspiration for the building of what became one of Sydney's most fashionable churches. The thankful husband and father was Henry Mort, a pastoralist, company director and politician.

The church was All Saints' Church of England, Woollahra, which is 100 years old this year. Its main centenary celebration, a thanksgiving service will be held tomorrow morning.

Announcement of classification of this large Gothic-revival church by the National Trust of Australia this year has coincided with the centenary. The Trust noted that it had one of the "loftiest and richest interiors" to be found in a Sydney church. It has been described also as "cathedral-like".

The present rector, the Rev. Ralph Fraser, attributes the vast and elaborate scale of All Saints' to a combination of reasons behind its erection.

Henry Mort's eldest son, (Henry) Wallace Mort, entered the Church of England. He was ordained in England in 1872. A Synod ordinance of the time provided that if a person built a church to the satisfaction of the bishop, that person would have the right to choose its first minister. It gave Henry Mort a second reason for building a church. He would not only be making an offering for the shipwreck survival of his wife and children, he would be providing a church for his son.

A third reason came in 1873, with the death of wife, Maria. It became also a memorial to her.

In 1874, the celebrated architect of the time, Edmund Blacket, began preparing plans for the church. The site chosen was part of the Point Piper estate of the Cooper family, whose members included the first Speaker in the Legislative Assembly of the colony of N.S.W., Sir Daniel Cooper.

The land for the church, which is in Ocean Street, Woollahra, was obtained on a 99-year lease from Alexander Campbell, who in turn had leased the land from Sir Daniel Cooper. Mr Campbell had built Rosemont, one of Woollahra's early homes, some years previously. The Campbells of Rosemont were later to attend services at All Saints' - as does the present occupant of Rosemont, Lady Lloyd Jones, widow of a former chairman of David Jones Ltd.

The house and the church, once "next-door neighbours," are now separated by blocks of flats.

A history of All Saints' produced for the centenary says that in the late 1860's when Wollahra and its population began to develop more rapidly, it was felt that the churches of St Mark, Darling Point and St. Matthias, Paddington, left a large section of the area without a church of its own. All Saints' would fill the gap.

Henry Mort donated pounds 3,500.0.0 towards the building. The balance of the cost of pounds 5,400.0.0 was provided by some of his friends and people in the area.

The foundation stone was laid by Bishop Barker, the second Bishop of Sydney, in 1874. Members of the clergy, and the choir of St. Mark's assembled in the Wollahra Council Chambers, then opposite the church site (the building was most recently an art gallery), and walked to the site.

The Bishop of Sydney had said that he would accept a church with accommodation for at least 300 people and which would be capable of extension.

Edmund Blacket proposed that the church would have a large tower and spire. The base of the tower was built, but the full tower and spire have not been. (A narrow stone spiral staircase to a room used by the church fellowship members is all that exists of the tower.)

If it had been built, the pinnacle would have been, as The Sydney Morning Herald reported in 1874, "higher than that of any other church or building in the colony". (The church was built on an elevated site).

All Saints' was built of dressed sandstone with an oak shingle roof. It has a feeling of space inside but as the National Trust has commented, the exterior lacks the impact it would have had if the tower and spire had been erected.

In its early days All Saints' was connected with many prominent families in the colony. Among the congregation when the chief stone was laid in 1874 were the Honorable John Campbell, Mr (later Sir) Edward Knox, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, (Henry's brother) and the architect, Blacket, all prominent figures of the period.

To some extent there has been some friendly rivalry over the years between All Saints' and St. Mark's, Darling Point, a church still regarded as probably the most fashionable in Sydney.

It is interesting to note that Henry Mort's brother, Thomas Sutcliffe Mort provided the land for St. Mark's and was one of its first churchwardens. T.S.Mort continued worshipping at St. Mark's. (His house is now the residence of the Anglican Archbishop of Sydney).

Some of the well-known people of the time who worshipped at All Saints' included Sir Frederick Darley, Chief Justice of N.S.W., Judge Dowling,

Sir John Hay, the Hon. James White, the Hon.E.W. Knox, Sir Daniel and Mr William Cooper of historic Wollahra House and the Hon. W. Laidley.

The Rev. H Wallace Mort duly became the church's first rector. He is responsible for some of its fine adornments.

One of the plans of Mr (later Canon) Mort and his supporters was to order a series of stained-glass windows depicting well-known Biblical scenes. The windows were made in London by the city's oldest established stained-glass manufactory, Messrs Heaton, Butler and Bayne - and the order took almost half a century to complete. The Herald described them in 1926 as on the whole probably the finest windows of any church in the State.

"In this church students may note the developments of nearly half a century in window-making", the Herald commented. "The earliest lights indicate stiff, almost squat figures of saints in sombre, unsympathetic colours. The latest, with the afternoon sun shining through them, reveal a beautifully mellow richness."

Canon Mort was the rector until 1914. In his time All Saints' was enlarged.

The bishop had shown foresight when he laid down that the church should be capable of being extended. Within five years of its building it was found to be too small and an extension was begun in 1881. The nave and aisles were extended to the full length Blacket had planned.

In its jubilee year, 1926, it was decided to replace with stone porches the two "temporary" wooden porches that had been standing for 43 years. It was then that Blacket's plan for the tower and spire was amended and the half-tower was built where one of the wooden porches had been.

In 1946 disaster struck!

The rector, the Rev. Canon G.A.Conolly (he was the third rector and succeeded the Rev. Canon W.L.Langley) was on his way home from town in a tram when he smelt smoke and heard fire engines rushing to the scene. He soon discovered that his church was on fire!

The oak shingle roof went up in flames quickly. The heat melted lead in high windows lighting the nave (luckily not the stained-glass windows lower down) and molten lead and charred wood from the roof fell on to the pews.

Over the years All Saints' has been linked with schools in the district. Its most notable ties are with Cranbrook, the private school of boys at Bellevue Hill.

Canon Langley was a member of a committee that secured some land for the school after the purchase of the main property and became the first Council of Cranbrook School. In 1955 a kindergarten for Cranbrook was



opened in the church grounds.

The present rector, Mr Fraser, is a member of the School Council.

All Saints' is no longer such a strong rival to St. Mark's as a "fashionable" church, although its congregation still numbers some prominent Sydney people. However, some of early Sydney's best-known families will be represented when descendants of the church's first worshippers attend the thanksgiving service tomorrow.

The Anglican Archbishop, the Most Rev Sir Marcus Loane, and the Governor, Sir Roden Cutler will take part in the service.

The church's fourth rector, the Rev. E.G. Mortley, who retired last year, will return to take part of the service.

Canon Mort's only surviving child, Miss Eirene Mort, who is 96, will not be able to come to Sydney from her home in Bowral for the service.

However, descendants of Henry Mort and Canon Mort are this year giving the church a display case of Canon Mort's private Communion vessels and his prayer book, to mark the centenary of the church built and long served by their ancestors.

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## THE FACES OF NORFOLK ISLAND ...

- Alan Gill  
 - The Sydney Morning Herald  
 - October 8th, 1977.

One of the world's more unusual telephone books has just been released. The 1977 Norfolk Island directory lists, for the first time, subscribers' nicknames as well as surnames and initials.

On an island where much of the population shares about a dozen names, and where local telephone calls are free, the inclusion of nicknames greatly assists identification. Nicknames are part of the Norfolk way of life. During a recent visit, I met "Ma" Bailey, "Aunt Nin" Christian, "Girly" Nobbs, and "Kik" and "Gran" Quintal, to name just a few.

"Kik" Quintal, an Anglican churchwarden and talented singer whose rendering of the Pitcairn Anthem (and equally moving Ship of Fame) brings tears to the eyes of tourists, derived his from a childhood habit of kicking out in his cot.

"Spy" O'Leary, alias the Administrator of Norfolk Island, Mr Desmond O'Leary, is one figure whose nickname is not included in the directory. He was given the name because of previous employment with ASIO.

Bounty mutineers may have seized one of her ancestor's ships, but Queen Elizabeth has no more loyal subjects than the present generation of Norfolk Islanders. During a visit to Norfolk Island Hospital I met Mrs "Gran" Quintal, a homely and much-loved woman, sometimes described as "Queen" of Norfolk. In a loud voice and with obvious feeling she told me that she and her friends were shocked at what she considered Australia's decision to "demote" God Save the Queen in favour of Advance Australia Fair. She considered the move insulting to Her Majesty and to "our heavenly hosts." "Gran" is a descendant of John Adams, the longest surviving of the original Bounty mutineers, who died peacefully - in contrast to the violent deaths of most of his companions - on Pitcairn in 1829.

Later the same day I drove to a tiny cottage where another "queen", Helen Buffett, resides. Miss Buffett, 93, is a cheerful, but gentle soul who is proud of being Norfolk's oldest inhabitant. She lives in a darkened house - she "distrusts" electricity - and pushes an ancient bicycle along the unlit roads and footpaths. Miss Buffett no longer rides her bicycle - "this old body won't let me" - but uses it as a substitute walking stick.

The term Islander on Norfolk denotes a descendant of one of the original families who settled on the island from Pitcairn in 1856. Others, even if born on Norfolk, are called (subject to status) "residents" or "mainlanders."

Two Englishmen, John Buffett and John Evans, members of the crew of the *Cyrus*, joined the Pitcairn people in 1823; George Hunn Nobbs, an Irishman who became the islanders' first pastor (and who arranged the transfer to Norfolk) and an American named Bunker arrived in 1828. With the exception of Bunker, who died soon after his arrival, descendants of the others are to be found in both the present Norfolk and Pitcairn communities.

According to some sources these families are considered, to this day, to have a social edge of other islanders. Quality Row, Kingston, where the government and administrative offices are located, is jocularly known as Buffettville.

Certainly, I found no evidence of exclusiveness. If an accolade were to be given to the most open-hearted person on Norfolk, this would surely go to *Mrs Sylvia "Girly" Nobbs*, who invited me to share her family table at the Anniversary Day picnic. She issued a similar invitation into her "family" to nearly 40 students and their teachers who were holidaying on Norfolk from Sydney Boys' High School.

Sylvia Nobbs is not the only "Girly" on Norfolk. After the picnic I took a food parcel to *Miss "Girly" Christian*, aged 82, a lovable, if at times, irascible, eccentric, who is undoubtedly Norfolk's best-known character. She is the great-great-granddaughter of Fletcher Christian, leader of the Bounty mutiny. She told me that her father, Reuben Christian, had been the first male Christian to be born on Norfolk - soon after the exodus from Pitcairn - 121 years ago.

"Girly" Christian's version of this event may be incorrect. Merval Hoare's authoritative book, *Norfolk Island - An Outline of Its History*, states: "On May 3, 1856, the whole Pitcairn community, numbering 193 persons, with their household goods, embarked on the *Morayshire* for Norfolk Island. Sea-sickness made the five weeks' voyage an unpleasant one. A child was born en route and named Reuben Denison Christian."

About fifteen years ago "Girly" stood on the back of her horse to pick some fruit from a tree. The horse reared, threw her, and rolled on her, after which a leg was amputated and she has been confined to bed. A few years ago her house was destroyed by fire. She refused to move to a nursing home and now lives in the stable once occupied by her horse.

"Girly" holds court from her bed - her large frame supported by an array of cushions and pillows. Beside the bed are old photographs, including a portrait of her part-Tahitian grandmother, bridal bouquets of plastic flowers, sacks and biscuit tins stuffed with mementoes, and a vintage pianola with music rolls.

The first thing I noticed about "Girly" was her accent - pure Devon with a dash of Cumberland. A strategically placed mirror allows her to inspect approaching visitors, whom she addresses with shireks of welcome or abuse according to whim.



"Girlie" has been visited by linguistic students, television personalities (including Britain's Alan Whicker), and by a descendant of William Bligh. She says she is grateful to Bligh - "if it were not for him I wouldn't have known this island. Just breathing Norfolk air is lovely."

In her childhood she wore Tahitian clothes, and was carried in the arms of the early settlers. She speaks of feeling "sore" (sick), of "stolleys" (tales or invented stories) and told me about the man of 97 who proposed to her - "I tell y'orlyey (all of you) he must have gone glockey (gone made)."

As befits an island in which so many of its citizens are related, Norfolk is a closely knit "family" whose community spirit is reflected in the weekly newspaper, Norfolk Islander. The editor, printer and sole reporter is *Mr Tom Lloyd*, a former compositor with the Sydney Morning Herald, who is helped by his wife, Tim.

Tom is a descendant of John Buffett, who started the Pitcairn Island Register, a handwritten chronicle of life in the original Bounty community, in 1823. Tom describes Norfolk as "five minutes long by three minutes wide" - an allusion to the island's size (in miles) and to the speed with which news and gossip reaches his office.

Thanks to Tom Lloyd, also to Alex, Steve and Ken Nobbs, the sons of "Girlie" Nobbs, I was able to secure tape-recordings of the hymns, songs and accents of Norfolk, also conversations in "Norfolk" (the emphasis is on the 1st syllable), as the language is known.

Apart from the snatches of conversation from passing schoolchildren, or maybe a mother scolding her child, the average visitor is unlikely to hear local people "speak Norfolk." The reasons are partly sociological - feelings of inferiority, suggestions that the language is "merely Pidgin", and a well-bred reluctance to speak unintelligibly in front of strangers.

Norfolk (nobody speaks of "Norfolkan" or "Norfolkese") and Pitcairnese - the language spoken by the Bounty descendants who returned to Pitcairn - are similar derivatives of 18th century English and Tahitian, differing mainly in the amount of Australian, New Zealand, English and American slang introduced after the migration.

The common word "kushu" (fine, splendid, thank you) in answer to "Whataway you?" (how are you) is, for example, not genuine Norfolk, but is a relic of an expression imported from Australia and New Zealand in the 1920s.

Norfolk and Pitcairnese have the unusual distinction of being among the few languages whose origins can be traced to a precise period in history.

Norfolk is spoken in their homes by people of all backgrounds and education. When speaking "normal English" most islanders no longer have traces of English regional accents. Exceptions are the older folk, such as "Girlie" Christian, who spoke of Bligh's "jantle persooador" (the lash) and said: "Isa larna you (I will teach you) Norfolk."

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