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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.

July 1981.

Dear Friend and Member,

The Annual Meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, July 17th, 1981, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS. 1981 - 1982.

Syllabus Item: This being the Annual Meeting & Election of Officers
the Syllabus will be informal.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Samuelson, Captain, together with Mesdames Rootes,
Longhurst, and McLeod.

Mr. R. Lee,
President.

Phone: 570.1244

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.

Phone: 587.9164

Mrs. E. Wright,
Treasurer & Social Sec.
Phone 599.4884

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

Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer.
Phone 587.1159

"If you have knowledge, let others light their candles by it."

.... Thomas Fuller.

(2)

Many of our Members, remembering Mr. Les Kell, have been and still are ill. We are sorry to hear this, and hope they will be well again soon.

To Mr. Don Sinclair, Vice President of the St. George Historical Society, President Mr. Bob Lee and Members extend their deep sympathy in the sad loss of his father, who passed away at the age of 95 years.

Mrs. E. McMillan, late of Lydham Avenue, Rockdale, passed away recently, having attained the great age of 93 years. She joined the St. George Historical Society in the late 1960's and proved to be a very alert, informative and interested member. Due to illness Mrs. McMillan was later unable to attend meetings, but still retained her interest in the progress of the Society. To her family we extend our deepest sympathy.

20th Anniversary Dinner - Ainslee Lodge, Bexley, Saturday, 18th July, 1981.
Pay in full at meeting.

Saturday, 3rd, Sunday 4th, and Monday 5th October, 1981 - Weekend historical tour of Dubbo and Districts. \$92.00. Deposit \$10.00 at meeting.
Final payment - August meeting.

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 reprinted 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 \$1.25 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.

No.9 Book in our series of books on history, local and thereabouts, is in the process of being researched. Can you help with any information concerning the early Pioneers of the District? If you can, this will be greatly appreciated.

Members please note: Due to circumstances, it has been found necessary to increase the Annual Subscription as follows:-

<u>Per Member</u>	..	\$3.00)	<u>Due July 1981.</u>
<u>Per Family</u>	..	\$5.00)	

The Research Project - "Early Pioneers of the St. George District" - undertaken by some of our members is progressing. Much information has been gathered. However, there is still a long way to go. Help from interested members would be greatly appreciated.

HISTORY & CONSERVATION OF THE QUEEN VICTORIA MARKETS BUILDING --

- *Syllabus Item presented on
17th October 1980.*
- *Mr David Earle
Vice-President North Sydney
Historical Society -
Architect on City Council responsible
for the restoration of the Queen
Victoria Building.*

In or about 1831, some 11 years prior to the incorporation of Sydney, the old Market Buildings, occupying the larger portion of the present site, were built by the Government under the direct authority of Governor Bcurke. About this time the importation of mechanics by Dr. Lang took place and these men were set to work on the erection of the structure. The Markets were constructed in four distinct sections for use as follows:

- One for butcher's meat and poultry
- One for retail fruit trade
- One for wholesale fruit trade
- One for the sale of potatoes.

In November 1846, the land and buildings were handed over to the Corporation, and in 1859 the 4 sections were united by the construction of a central roof at the cost of pounds 10,000 or 12,000 and formed the markets familiar to the citizens up to 1891. The old George Street Markets outlived their usefulness and work of demolishing this relic of early Sydney was commenced in 1891, although not without strong opposition.

The demolition of the old Police Court in George, York and Druitt Streets (formerly a Greenway Building) enabled the Council to purchase this land from the Government, thus acquiring the whole block and the opportunity was taken of widening the surrounding streets.

The work of constructing the new City Markets was commenced in 1893, and the foundation stone at the south-western angle of the super-structure was laid by the Mayor, Alderman Sir William P Manning, on 8th December of that year. The building was finally completed and opened with ceremony by the Mayor, Alderman Matthew Harris on 21st July 1898. The building was completed under 13 contracts at a total of pounds 261,102.10.9d. The design of the building was selected from 4 designs placed before Council, and is a refined treatment of the form of Romanesque in which the American ruggedness has been considerably modified. The whole pile is dominated by the great dome, 62 ft. in diameter which rises to a height of 196 ft. to the top of the finial over the cupola.

The central main pavillion was distinguished by a large semi-circular entrance archway, 40 ft. high, springing from polished

trachyte columns & having triple pairs of ornamental wrought-iron gates, the dividing columns supporting sub-arches, & trachyte shafts forming a rose window filled with specially designed ornamental glazing. The walls externally are of the best quality Sydney freestone & these walls are supported on massive piers of Bowral trachyte which in turn are seated on brick piers extended up from solid rock of the basement.

The internal construction with the exception of the piers for the great dome, is iron & steel work encased throughout with terra-cotta lumber. The main roof over the avenue was formed with a series of lattice semi-circular steel trusses. Ventilation was effected by means of metal louvres fixed to a T iron frames braced & secured to the semi-circular principals.

The total length of the building is about 6111 ft. & the average width about 93 ft. The building consists of a basement of the full area of site & three storeys. The northern section of the basement is utilised as a wine cellar. As originally designed there were on the ground floor 2 rows of 30 shops each, facing George & York Streets respectively & having entrances & show windows both to the street & to the great interior avenue which was 32 ft. wide, 68 ft. high & arcaded on the ground floor. This avenue ran through connecting the main central entrances from George Street & York Street, the whole finishing with a semi-circular glass & iron roof. The first & second floors were divided & occupied variously as workrooms, showrooms, offices, etc. At the Market Street end, was a large hall capable of seating 500 persons.

The entire building was served by 6 staircases, one set being at either end & the other four at the centre, 6 ft. & 8 ft. wide respectively. The central staircases were carried upon freestone arches, piers & columns highly ornamented. The steps throughout are of Bowral trachyte. The building was also served by three passenger elevators & a large goods lift from basement to second floor, operated & driven by electric power & two hydraulic ram cart lifts from York Street to basement.

It is interesting to note that in the construction of this building there have been used approximately 55,430 cubic yards of excavation; 4,500,000 bricks; 24,000 cubic feet of trachyte, 257,000 cubic feet of freestone; 3,000 tons of iron & steel work, 11 acres of plastering; 1 acre of roof glazing; 6 acres of terra-cotta lumber; 1 acre of tiling; 3/4 of an acre of asphalt paving & 3,000 square feet of prismatic pavement lights.

The building was constructed on the most modern principles & the whole of the iron & steel work throughout was rendered fire resisting by terra-cotta lumber casing. In fact, the whole of the building was fire-resisting to such an exceptional degree that in the possible event of a fire outbreak it was not likely that the fire would be more than merely local.

The whole of the work was designed by & carried out under the supervision of Mr. George McRae (then City Architect). The consulting supervising Engineer in connection with iron & steel work & machinery was Mr George Massey, M.I.M.E. The total capital expenditure of this edifice was pounds 265,287.0.0.

Remodelling: In 1916 the Lord Mayor, Alderman Hon.R.D.Meagher, M.L.C presented a minute to the Council embodying a suggestion for the remodelling of the building & modernising the disposition of the various sections & the appearance of the shop fronts & plans were prepared. The remodelling of the building was approved by Council on 12th February 1917 & it was decided to invite tenders for the works comprised in the plans & specification but exclusive to the ground & first floors of the Druitt Street end block.

On 18th June 1917 a tender was accepted for the sum of pounds 40,944 to be completed within 12 months from the date of order to commence which was fixed at 10th September 1917. On 23rd April 1918 the Council approved of the works on the ground & first floors of the Druitt Street end block being carried out by the contractors at an additional cost of pounds 26,558. On March 26th 1918, the Council decided to change the title of the structure from Queen Victoria Market Building to Queen Victoria Building.

The ground floor was extensively altered, the central arcade being dispensed with and the shops extended the full width of the building from George to York Streets, except in cases where impracticable on account of intervening staircase blocks, cart lift wells & the arrangement of the new Post Office in York Street at the Druitt Street end of the building.

The total number of new shops was 30. The show windows were treated in a modern style with black marble bases & polished copper mouldings & the shops well lighted & ventilated. An attractive feature consisted of a lantern light over the centre of the shops of steel framing with leaded glazing of a pleasing design.

The central entrance block was practically unaltered, giving access to upper floors from George Street by means of the trachyte stairways & an electrical dual control elevator. The staircase blocks at each end of the building remained & the entrance at the southern end was from York Street & at the norther end from Market & George Streets.

The original concert room at Market Street end of the second floor was converted into the Municipal Library block, a floor space of 9,700 super feet being obtained by the addition of two new floors; forming a self-contained library block with lending branch, children's reading room & cloak rooms, reading rooms & newspaper room. On the top floor is the Librarian's, Assistants', Cataloguing, Bookbinders' & Cloak rooms. A separate electric automatic elevator is provided.

Competitive designs were invited from architects in Australia for

remodelling the upper floors of the building. The proposal adopted included the addition of two storeys & the entire remodelling of the interior & it was estimated that a substantial return would result. On 15th May 1934 the Council decided to transfer the whole of the administration of the Electricity Department to the Building. The floor of the showroom is of white Bringelet marble & the lower part of the walls & counter fronts of Caluela marble, all quarried in N.S.W.

The Newspaper Room has 430 newspapers & magazines from all over the world to which the Library now subscribed. The pride of the Newspaper Room however, was a complete file of the Sydney Morning Herald from the date of the first issue to the present day. Another special feature was a collection of press cuttings on Australians of note & Australiana, which was commenced in 1910 & still maintained today. The cuttings fill many volumes & are provided with a comprehensive index.

The new Childrens Room is noteworthy. The room was specially painted in gay, pastel shades; flowers & pictures were provided & even a wash-basin & liquid soap. Juvenile borrowers were supposed to have reach the age of 12 years before being admitted as members of the Library but elasticity was permitted. The Library provided a most successful innovation & was visited & copied by a number of librarians from other States.

Today the Library houses in the main section a permanent stock of over 4,000 reference books & the cataloguing updated to the new Dewey Decimal system.

Early in 1920 it was recommended to introduce wicket gates as a means of reducing books lost through theft - apparently on the presumption that only non-borrowers were dishonest. The gates were installed in 1921 & at the end of that year the number of books missing totalled 1,3222 (nearly 300 more than the previous year). Perhaps the thieves treated these precautions as a form of 'dare' but in 1922 there were only 905 books missing. However, the wicket gates caused the forming of long queues with the result that many borrowers could not afford to wait & stopped using the Library. Consequently the Library discarded the Browne Charging System in 1923 & introduced the Newark System.

Main Central Dome: The main facades consist of a large central block dominating the whole pile, the ends of the block being emphasized by pavilions or towers surmounted by small domes, the intervening lengths of the fronts being relieved by small sub-towers capped by metal domes.

The predominating feature of the whole block is the Main Central Dome, a conspicuous feature of Sydney architecture. It is the largest dome in the Southern Hemisphere, nearly 62 ft. external diameter, rising to a height of 190 ft. from the pavement, the imposing group being flanked and sustained by typical towers crowned with smaller domes & angle turrets. At the level of the springing

of the dome proper is a gallery promenade, extending around the whole perimeter, access being obtained from an interior stair-case starting from the second floor. From this gallery is a magnificent panoramic view of Sydney & its environs. The drum of the dome is pierced by a number of windows separated by characteristic fasciculated piers connected by semi-circular headed arches, & these windows serve to illuminate the brilliant inner glass dome which is seen from the various floors in the interior of the building at the centre.

From the ground floor, looking up through the circular well-holes on the first & second floors a splendid view is obtained of the apparently super-poised inner dome, 106 ft. from the ground floor, with its delicately-tinted glass filling. All internal joinery is of Australian cedar.

The outer surface of the main dome is covered with sheet copper, weighing 2 1/2 lbs. per ft. with rolls spaced at about 4 ft. centres. The whole framework is constructed entirely of steel rivetted together throughout in position. The inner dome is entirely of steel framing forced with 16 ribs, the glazing being effected by means of delicate tints of various colours of cathedral glass. The illumination for this glass work is obtained from the circumjacent windows in the drum of the outer dome.

(These notes whilst covering the illustrated talk given by Mr David Earle on 17th October 1980, were reprinted with Mr Earle's permission from the Parramatta & District Historical Society tour of the Queen Victoria Building, Sydney Town Hall & St. Andrew's Cathedral held on Sunday 22nd July 1979. The actual notes were compiled by: Mesdames F L Scurrah & P.C. Corthorn.)
