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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5c.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
Arncliffe. 2205.

August 1981.

Dear Friend and Member,

The August meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, August 21st, 1981, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Syllabus Item: Mr. Fred Wilkins will present "An Old Comedy Night".

Do come along and enjoy some fun and laughter. This is something different.

Business: General.

Supper Roster: Captain: Mrs. Thompson, together with Mesdames Troughton, Hunt & Grace.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. R. Lee,
President.
Phone 570.1244.

Mrs. E. Eardley.
Sec. & Bulletin Ed.
Phone 59.8078.

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.
Phone 587.9164

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

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

"The road to success has few travellers, because many get lost trying to find short cuts."

Friendship Book 1971.

(2)

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

Result of Competition: Hand made picture presented by Mrs. J. Hindmarsh and Mrs. E. Wright.

Winner - Mrs. Barbara Dixon, Dunmore Street, Bexley.

Saturday. 3rd, Sunday 4th, and Monday 5th October, 1981 - Weekend historical tour of Dubbo and Districts. \$92.00. Final payment August meeting. A few seats still available.

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.

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. Can you help towards "Book No. 9" in our series of books on history?

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)	

PIONEERS OF WEST BOTANY - John Andrews.

- Margaret Dunsmore
of Eastwood.
June 1981.

John Andrews, born in London in 1828, came to Sydney as a young man of 21 years of age and to live at the place later to be called Rockdale. For fifty five years he was a member of the Wesleyan, later Methodist Church in Bay Street, holding high offices in that church. Mr C W Napper, who remembers Mr Andrews as an old man, recalls that he lived in a two storied house in what is now Princes Highway, opposite the present ambulance station and that his wife conducted a drapery shop in adjoining premises.

This pioneer made a significant contribution to public life in that for a period of twenty three years he successfully conducted the school in Bay Street under the old denominational school regime, and until public school education became available to all children. At the time of his death in 1904 it was written:-

"There are hundreds of people scattered over the state who as boys or girls were taught by the good old veteran and who cherish for his memory a reverent and affectionate regard." (The Methodist of 29th October, 1904. page 2).

William Berghofer.

William Berghofer, a native of Germany, came to N.S.W. in 1852 when he was 44 years of age, accompanied by his wife Anna and their six children, the eldest of whom was 12 years of age. He was a farmer and acquired land in Rocky Point Road in what is now known as Kogarah (on his death certificate called Scarboro). P.Geeves and J.Jervis in their book "Rockdale - Its Beginning and Development" - p.53, say he told how he first came to take possession of his land in his wagon, but was forced to detour through the bush at Cobblers Pinch (now Arncliffe Hill) and suffered the capsizing of the vehicle with all his possessions.

William Berghofer no doubt prospered in the alien environment - three more children were born to him in N.S.W. and we read of him as the head of the committee which was formed to organise the building of St. Paul's Church of England Kogarah in 1869, and that prior to this there was a small Church of England Community in the Rocky Point area who met at his home for divine services. (Centenary Booklet published September, 1969.) He died on 31st May, 1890 and was buried in the Cemetery Kogarah (no doubt St. Paul's Churchyard).

John Iliffe.

John Iliffe, nurseryman, was born at Guilsborough, Northampton, England in or about the year 1840, and when a child of about ten years of age, came to Sydney N.S.W. His father was William Iliffe and mother Rebeeca, whose maiden name was Smith. He came to live in Rocky Point Road at what is now Rockdale and when 22 years of age married Sarah Morse, who lived with her parents, Thomas and Mary Morse, on the opposite side of Rocky Point Road.

John Iliffe worked with great skill and zeal to establish and maintain a nursery of extensive proportions in the area between the present day Bestic and Bryant Streets and built a very fine stone villa which he called "Rosevale". By 1884 "Rosevale" had gained the reputation as "the most extensive nursery and plant establishment in the Colony" - (The Illustrated Sydney News 7th June 1884).

In addition to "Rosevale" John Iliffe held 44 acres of land "at Hurstville in the centre of Gannons Forrest" (as referred to in the above publication), where the business of tree propagation was carried on.

This pioneer died on 3rd September, 1910 at "Rosevale" and was survived by two daughters, a son and two daughters having pre-deceased him. In due course of time the two nurseries ceased and the land they occupied was subdivided. Part of the above 44 acres was incorporated in the Bexley Golf Links and part in the residential areas in Ada, Hancock, Rose and Iliffe Streets of Bexley. "Rosevale" remained standing until 1962, when it was demolished and the stones which formed the beautiful facade of the home were given to the Rockdale Municipal Council in the hope that they might be incorporated in some significant structure.

William Iliffe.

William Iliffe, son of John Iliffe a coachman, was born in Northampton, England in or about the year 1811 and at 36 years of age married Harriett Randall in London. Within two or three years after his marriage, i.e. some time in 1850 or thereabouts he came to Sydney N.S.W. and took up residence in Crown Street, Woolloomooloo. Waugh & Cox's Sydney Directory of 1855, lists William Iliffe a grocer, at 19 Crown Street.

In the list of persons qualified to vote for Members of the Legislative Assembly for the Canterbury Electoral District

1859 - 60 appears "William Iliffe Residence Woolloomooloo, Freeholder - Rocky Point Road - House and Land", so we may assume that he had acquired land and built a residence in that place, but he died at 61 Crown Street, Woolloomooloo on 12th October 1868 survived by his wife Harriett, two sons and two daughters, one son having predeceased him. His wife continued the business at Woolloomooloo until at least 1882 (as appears in Sands Sydney and Suburban Directory) and she died on 31st December 1888.

William Anthony de Jean Iliffe.

William Anthony de Jean Iliffe, son of the above, was born in Sydney (presumably Woolloomooloo) in 1851 and married Martha Denning McGill at Balmain when 19 years of age. Sands Directory of 1880 includes William Iliffe a nerseryman at 3/7 Stephen Street and in the directory of 1892, Iliffe & Co., nurserymen appear in Rocky Point Road and William Iliffe on the western side of that road. He took up residence in a stone cottage set in very extensive grounds situated on the western side of the railway line and very close to the present Banksia station. Here he grew many rare plants - importing gerberas from South Africa - streletzias, guava and loquat fruits. He attended Sydney University and especially studied the works of William Shakespeare and arranged the acting of his plays. His was a very attractive character and he was loved by his family. He lived until 30th August 1933, dying in his home in Bowmer Street, Banksia, survived by two daughters and three sons. His grandchildren recall the delight of his garden and home, alas long since gone from scene and taken over by suburban residential development.

THE ROSEVALE NURSERIES - Rocky Point Road, Cook's River.

- *The Illustrated Sydney News*
Saturday June 7, 1884. No.6-VolXXI.

About a mile and a half from Cook's River Dam, and about ten minutes walk from Mrs Clume's West Botany Hotel, Mr Iliffe's Nurseries will be seen on the left. The exact spot is indicated by the exquisitely ornate villa facing the road, for beyond this there is no sign of any kind to show that the most extensive nursery and plant establishment in the colony is near at hand.

In point of fact Mr Iliffe does not seem to court the custom of the casual purchaser, but lays himself out to supply whole-sale buyers - the nurserymen of this and the adjacent colonies.

Victoria, which has attained such a lead in horticultural matters, is a most extensive customer; for, though there are large plant establishments in that colony, many varieties are propagated in this climate with greater facility - notably, the camellia, and the whole race of the citrus or orange tribe, and these are, in season, sent to Melbourne in enormous quantities, the supply last year being quite inadequate to the demand.

And then, the growing demand for ornamental plants and fruit-yielding trees as this colony is settled, is very apparent. Every purchaser of land designed for his future home likes to surround it with a wealth of shrubberies and a garden; and, to meet this, the business of the nurseryman must yearly extend in almost geometrical progression. Mr. Iliffe seems to have realised this, and, with the foresight and sagacity of a thoroughly business man, has placed himself in the very foremost position to meet the emergencies of the future. Figures will but faintly convey to the reader the extent to which this probably demand has been provided for; and nothing but a personal visit will realise the enormous work carried on at Rosevale Nurseries and at the Hurstville establishment alluded briefly to at the close of this article. Those who have seen the Jardins de Ville of Paris, where all the plants for the decoration of the reserves of that city are propagated, may form some idea of Mr Iliffe's place, and the busy work of layering, budding, grafting, insertion of cuttings, re-potting and other processes.

Entering the grounds, the arrangement of which have recently been made to suit the requirements of the new residence, the visitor is first introduced to the plant-houses, of which there are more than a dozen. These are extensive structures, with bamboo wicker work sides, and covered with tea-tree spray, just sufficiently close to break the too free rays of the sun and heavy rains, but to admit of the free circulation of the air. The contents of these houses it is a treat to inspect. Every plant is in the most perfect health, having that deep green foliage and compact habit so rarely witnessed in plant-houses. Camellias in thousands, and of all varieties, first greet the eye; *Schinus molle*, that ever popular and graceful tree, which seems to revel in all temperate climates; guavas, of several kinds; a splendid collection of pittosporums, embracing *Eugenoides nigrescens*, *Ralphia bicolor*, *Tobira revolutum*, and others; *Hibiscus*, of varieties; and veronicas. Another house is marked by the presence of a large collection of the tuberous-rooted begonias of popular varieties, and especially so by a large number of seedlings raised by Mr Iliffe, many of which are striking departures from the ordinary type, and will assuredly make their mark in the future. Another house is devoted to the *Coleus*, and to the specimen plants of *Hydrangea*, etc. The many varieties of *coleus* at the time of

our visit were beautifully coloured, and like all other plants; in the most robust health. The collection in another house consists chiefly of magnolias, of which *Grandiflora fuscata*, *Glaucia purpurea*, are the chief favourites, and there are daphnes of several kinds. Climbing and trailing plants occupy another house, where all the popular kinds are represented.

Six wells with an abundant supply of water, and worked by pumps, furnish the tanks from which, by gravitation, the beds are watered. Indeed, it is to this abundant and never-failing source that the stock is kept in a constantly progressive state, and never allowed to flag or wither. The labour of watering, the contents of the sheds and frames during excessive heat may be better imagined than described. Attached to these bush-houses, and made to do special duty, are several ranges of frames which are covered by calico fixed on rollers. These are devoted to bringing forward the recently struck cuttings for acclimatisation to the open beds; indeed the *rationale* of the system is: cuttings struck in heat, removal to frame, thence to the bush-house, and from there to the open ground.

In the hot house, on the one hand, are some fine specimens, in perfect health, of the tropical and semi-tropical ferns, a detailed notice of which would extend this article beyond our available space; on the other side is a great collection of cuttings of every choice plant requiring heat; bouvardias, stephanotis, and other plants, being features.

An important department of the Rosevale Nursery is the extensive stool grounds for the camellias, magnolias, daphnes, gardenias etc. Each parent plant is surrounded by scores of layers, which, at the time of our visit, from their vigorous and erect growth had evidently started life on their own account, and only required to be cut away from the mother plant to form independent members of their respective races.

It should be mentioned that the soil at Rosevale is a good one, yet conducive to fibrous habit in the stock; and it is this feature which probably has given such popularity to the stock raised there.

Perhaps some of the finest examples of holly in the colony are to be seen at Rosevale. Two specimens of the Chines holly (*cornuta*) are fully 16 feet high, and of compact habit; these annually are cut for their foliage and berries, and seem to stand such treatment well. Other examples are the English, and several variegated varieties, which though thriving, do not equal in vigour the kind above mentioned.

Apart from the mere commercial aspect of the place, Mr Iliffe

finds great interest in a botanical and scientific point of view. Engaged as he is in raising plants from seed, he is interested in critically observing the singular departures from the normal type of special plants in a group of seedlings. For example, in raising a lot of seedlings, from the pretty *Raphiolipus* he noticed one plant of quite phenomenal type, and taking care of this, he was able to announce it was *Raphiolipus intermedia*, a variety of most distinct character, partaking of the form of ovata and indica - a most interesting and desirable shrub, by which an English nurseryman would have made a fortune.

Recently, too in a batch of seedlings of *Pittosporum Ralphidii*, he found a variegated plant, which he has since propagated, and this must prove a most desirable novelty for our nurserymen.

There are at Rosevale some grand specimens of pines, cypresses, grevilleas, and other trees, which only a visit can convey any adequate idea of. Altogether, the visit will be one of unalloyed pleasure to those who care for the beautiful in the vegetable kingdom. Certainly, the collection of dahlias is far and away the best in the colony; the soil, shelter, and degree of moisture seeming exactly to suit them; for, though our visit was the day after a scorching hot wind, with a temperature of over 100° the flowers were uninjured, and the plants were literally vigorous in growth, and covered with a wealth of bloom, which one is accustomed to associate only with the dahlias of England, when the cool of the declining Autumn makes every blossom a "show flower". A large trade is done in supplying the Sydney bouquetiers with flowers of all kinds from Rosevale.

About two miles from the old nursery Mr Iliffe has a farm of 44 acres of purchased land. This is situate at Hurstville, in the centre of Gannon's Forest. A large portion of this has been some years cleared and devoted to nursery purposes. It is here that the business of fruit tree propagation is carried on, under the intelligent direction of Mr Mascord, and to give our readers some faint notion of the extent of the work there, the following figures may be noted: on one bed are 14,000 non-blighting apple-stocks for budding this season; there are stocks of Majetin, or Northern Spy, and these are raised from cuttings of the root. On several other beds of immense stocks of apples of all the best varieties of last season's grafting; and on another, is the stock of trained trees for the approaching planting season. Throughout the whole collection (and we critically examined it) not a particle of blight is perceptible. One portion of the nursery is devoted to proved varieties of apples, from

which scions for the young stock are taken.

But the marvels of the place are the young orange, lemon, and peach collections. Of the first named there are fully 10,000 grafted on the seedling lemon; of the lemon about 5,000; while of peaches there are plants for this next season numbering about 5,000 and one bed of seedlings for budding this year, of fully 15,000. This bed fully illustrates the peculiarly suitable conditions offered by the locality for the growth of the peach; it presents one evenly dark green mass, as uniform in growth as a field of oats, and there can be no doubt that, on the first fall of rain, the process of budding must be as uniformly successful as was that of last season.

There are also extensive divisions of the place devoted to the plum, apricot, nectarine, mulberry, pear, vine, and a few other fruit-yielding trees; the exceptions being raspberry, gooseberry and currants for which the Sydney district is known to be unsuitable.

In addition to the fruit tree propagation, advantage is taken of this land for the extensive propagation of roses, of which about 500 varieties form the collection. The droughty season and the prevalence of hot winds during the budding season, and especially during the early part of January, has given but poor success to this operation, but still the stock is a very large one from the autumn-struck cuttings. The varieties propagated are simply those which have been found to give general satisfaction; and a visit during the trying months of January and February will show the sorts which resist and bloom well under such adverse conditions. One bed, devoted to recently imported varieties, is extremely interesting, as many display quite a departure from the ordinary type. These have been extensively propagated, and will be offered this season.

We must close this notice of the "Farm Garden" by alluding briefly to the collection of forest trees, camellias, pinus and cypress family, double and single tiger lily, to which large spaces are devoted. But, perhaps, the most noticeable feature, as pointing to future extension, is that of the enormous number of seedling lemon, which are literally as thick as mustard and cress in the seed beds. Many acres will be required for the mere pricking out or transplanting of these seedlings, preparatory to undergoing the grafting process. To those who take an interest in plant propagation a visit to Mr Iliffe's Hurstville Farm Nursery cannot fail to be highly interesting and instructive. As regards facilities of communication with the Rosevale Nurseries, the Kogarah omnibuses pass the place several times a day, and it is a pleasant walk of twenty minutes from the Cook's River 'bus stand, to and from which the vehicles run every half hour from Wynyard Square. It is expected that in a few months the railway will be completed, when the Rockdale station will be within 3 minutes' walk of Rosevale.

PIONEERS OF WEST BOTANY - THOMAS & MARY MORSE.

- Margaret Dunsmore
of Eastwood.
June 1981.

*The information to compile this account has been given
by Mrs Major of Narwee, a great grand daughter of
Thomas and Mary Morse.*

It was some time between 1856 and 1859 when Thomas Morse and his wife Mary came to the place now known as Rockdale and took up residence there. Their family was a large one. Their tenth child, James, was born at Pyrmont on the 20th July 1856 and Richard, their eleventh child was born in 1859 at the home they made in Rocky Point Road.

The land they acquired lay between the present site of St. John's Church of England and the storm water drain south of the present Banksia railway station. It stretched toward the west beyond the railway line which some twenty odd years later was to be laid at the back of their house.

Thomas Morse came from Gloucestershire, England, where he was born on 7th August, 1807. On 20th September, 1837 he married Mary Neale, who was born at Denham Court near Liverpool on 12th July, 1821. They both had long lives - Thomas died on 13th March 1886 and his wife on 23rd April 1903. They were buried in the church yard of St. Paul's Church of England, Kogarah.

Mary's father, John Neale, was one of three men who started the "Fitzroy Iron Mines" near Mittagong, and before coming to Rocky Point Road, Mary and Thomas lived at "Mandemar" and later near the mine.

Mary acquired considerable wealth and she was of a very kindly disposition. It was usual for her to buy provisions such as flour, tea, sugar etc. in large quantities, which she kept in the front rooms of her home. She engaged a maid, who was told to give any tramp who called at the home a good meal and to tell her when he was about to leave. She would then walk to the gate with him, shake hands and slip a sovereign into his hand. Frequently people would call to borrow supplies, as no doubt the nearest shop would be at Newtown, and she would let them have what they asked for, but she did not actually conduct a business.

After the railway was laid, Thomas Morse subdivided his land and named Gloucester Street after his home county in England. He made gifts of blocks to his children and grand children.

There were twelve children in the Morse family. Sarah, who was born on 23rd September, 1839, married John Iliffe, whose nursery property was situated on the other side of Rocky Point Road. John, who was born in 1841 was of a particularly happy and carefree disposition, but could not settle down. He wandered about the country from place to place, often sleeping in the open air. His younger brothers, James and Arthur, built homes in Rocky Point Road, near their parents' home. Thomas Jnr. acquired considerable wealth and bought from the builder, Mr. McLeod, the large property in Harrow Road, Bexley, which he called "Esrom". It is now the Lucy Gullett Hospital. Rev. Richard Morse, the eleventh child, was a well-known resident of Rockdale and Hurstville. He was ordained a minister in America in 1919 and founded the General Church of the New Jerusalem. He had a church erected next to his home in Dudley Street, Hurstville, where he conducted services in an honorary capacity. He lived to be 85 years of age and was survived by his brother Arthur, who then lived at Roseville.

Mary's grand daughter, Alma, a daughter of James Morse, remembered riding as a child with her grandmother in her coach and pair in Rockdale, and being told she must wear her gloves and be a lady. In spite of her considerable wealth and social position, Mary Morse was always eager to speak to all she met and to be kind and gracious.
