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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, 1982.

Dear Friend and Member,

The February Meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, February 19th, 1982, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business. General, discussion on activities for "Heritage Week".

Syllabus Item: By courtesy of the National Trust, Mrs. Jill Hedge will give an informative talk on the workings and achievements of the National Trust. To illustrate more clearly these achievements, Mrs. Hedge will show a series of coloured slides of historical interest, 'before and after restoration'.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Robb, Captain, and Mesdames Larnach, Meyers and Ronson.

Mr. R. Lee,  
President.  
Phone 570 1244

Mrs. B. Perkins,  
Publicity Officer.  
Phone 587 9164

Mrs. E. Eardley,  
Sec. & Bulletin Edtr.  
Phone 59 8078

Mrs. E. Wright,  
Treasurer.  
Phone 599 4884

Miss D. Row,  
Social Secretary.  
Phone 50 9300

Mr. A. Ellis,  
Research Officer.  
Phone 587 1159

"Good friends are better than fine gold; I find it sweet as I grow old to prove to you this happy truth, to which I held in early youth, And having proved, shall ever hold; Good friends are better than fine gold."

..... A. Grannis.

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.

Heritage Week 1981 was an outstanding success. Put your thinking caps on -- we need suggestions for Heritage Week 1982.

#### 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 Wollli 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"
- 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 - Phone 599 4884, Miss B. Otton - Phone 59 4259 (after 8 p.m.)  
Mrs. E. Eardley - Secretary - Phone 59 8078, Mr. A. Ellis - Phone 587 1159.

Also available is a very interesting book - "Tempe - East Hills Railway", by B.J. Madden. Published by Hurstville Historical Society. Price \$1.80 per copy. Postage extra. Phone 599 4884, 59 8078.

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?

..... Over.

3.

HERITAGE WEEK

Members please take note:

The March meeting will be held one week later than usual to coincide with Heritage Week. The date of meeting will be 26/3/1982 when Alderman Ron Rathbone will be Guest Speaker.

Lydham Hall:

Will be open from 10.30 a.m. to 4.30 p.m. Saturday and Sunday.

27/3/82 } Will ladies who have volunteered to help on Roster on  
28/3/82 ) either or both of these days please confirm arrangements  
with Mrs. Thompson. Light refreshments will be served.

Coach Tour of Historic Homes, Churches, Buildings and points of interest:

27/3/82.

Guide: Mr. Arthur Ellis.

Meet Western side of Rockdale Station - leave 2.00 p.m. - return 5.00 p.m.

Cost - \$2.00 per person.

WAITING LIST ONLY. See Miss D. Row for details.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF WEST BOTANY ST. CHURCH.

- Marian Rawlinson  
7th December 1981.

" On Sunday, 29th November, I attended the final service in the West Botany Street (Uniting) Church. The service was one of thanksgiving and was conducted by Rev. R. Albiston. Estimates of attendance varied between 200 and 300. The service commenced at 2.00p.m. and afterwards those present renewed old friendships and enjoyed afternoon tea. Photos and other mementos of past days were on display. When we arrived we were given the enclosed 'A Brief History of West Botany St. Church'."

On 28th November 1885 a group of interested residents held a meeting to form the Trust and take steps towards the erection of the West Botany St. Wesleyan Church. The first five meetings were held in the Rockdale Sunday School rooms.

Mr Fooks generously gave the building site and after calling tenders, that of Messrs. E & J Godfrey for pounds 497. was accepted. The first service was held on 30th May 1886 followed by a Public Tea Meeting the following Wednesday. Tickets were 1/6d adults and 1/-d for children under 12. The practice of holding an Anniversary Service and Tea Meeting continued for many years. And so the West Botany St. Wesleyan Church came into being, serving the spiritual needs of a small semi-rural community, mostly of pioneering stock settled on the arable but swampy farm lands located midway between the now populous suburbs of Rockdale and Brighton-le-Sands.

In their far-sighted wisdom the original trustees set their new church well back from the street alignment, thus making provision for additions, if and when required.

The Bank depression of the early 1890's played havoc with the finances of the church, whilst at the same time the white ants played havoc with the floor joists and timbers. It was decided to relay the floor and saturate the ground beneath with carbolic acid as a deterrant to further termite attack. This work was carried out in 1893 by Mr Eli Godfrey at a total cost of pounds 10.3.6. As there were no funds the Trustees paid from their own pockets. The financial position improved during the following year, so the organ underwent urgently needed repairs. In May 1895, gas was introduced to the district and the Trustees decided to connect the Church for better lighting, at a cost of pounds 18.15.0.

One cannot but admire the tenacity of purpose of the comparatively few adherents of the West Botany St. Church in their endeavour to maintain their Church property in good repair. It was an uphill

battle, but they all felt that their Christian purpose was well worth fighting for.

About September 1896 considerable discussions took place as to the advisability of forming a union with other churches which followed principles close to the Wesleyan faith. However, it was 1901 before Union was implemented, and the West Botany St. Wesleyan Church became known as the West Botany St. Methodist Church.

As the Golden Jubilee of the Church was fast approaching (1930's), it was decided to erect a new Church building and attach it to the existing one. Mr Charles Gray's tender for pounds 1,100.0.0. was accepted the dedication took place on 2nd May 1936. The special ceremony of opening the new entrance door was an honour bestowed on Miss Lily Bowmer. The two buildings were connected with folding doors, which were opened for special occasions to make more seating accommodation.

As the years passed by, the Trustees and Congregation realised the need for new Sunday School premises. The main hall was inadequate for their various needs, whilst the kitchen and office accommodation left much to be desired. The old weatherboard kindergarten hall had been ravaged by white ants and had become an eyesore.

It was decided that some form of improvement should be undertaken as early as possible; so the Parents & Friends' Association, Ladies Church Aid and other organisations began raising funds, which were augmented by Church Anniversary Appeals.

By June 1962 the sum of pounds 2,631.0.0. was in hand and the Trustees were now thinking in terms of a new hall and the renovation of the former hall, a scheme that would involve the expenditure of many thousands of pounds. Accordingly, a canvass was undertaken and after almost 3 years the income from this, together with donations, lifted finances to a satisfactory position for the work to begin. During this period, plans were prepared by Messrs. Brown & Mowbray, providing for a large hall and stage with 2 dressing rooms, a modern kitchen, office and storage space below the stage, and for the old hall to be modernised for kindergarten purposes with new furnishings throughout.

Special mention should be made of the Parents & Friends' Association who by their catering efforts raised well over pounds 1,000.0.0 and the other organisations who worked very hard.

Tenders were called and the tender of Mr H N Barton of Strathfield was accepted for pounds 14,125.0.0. This together with Architects' fees, interest on the Bank Loan and furnishings finally amounted to a cost of \$35,413.64. The hall was opened and dedicated on 7th August 1965 by Rev. S.M.Barrett, Secretary of Methodist Conference and President elect. The final payment on the hall was made to

the E.S. & A Bank on 4th July 1969. A wonderful effort by all.

It had always been a community-neighbourhood Church, and from then on saw a gradual decline in numbers as the young people married and moved away. Some older folk, too, either left the district or passed on, and there were no new families coming into the Church.

This trend continued until late 1980, when a decision was made for the Sunday School to join with the Rockdale Sunday School and for the Congregation to join with Rockdale for Worship Services from February 1981, but still maintaining their identity and the West Botany St. property.

Now the time has come, from January 1982, for the joining of the Congregations, with the Parish Council taking care of the property until some satisfactory use or sale is found for it.

Although West Botany St. has always been essentially a neighbourhood Church, its influence has spread far and wide and there are many from different localities and varied walks of life who look back in gratitude to the days at West Botany St. when they first came to know of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

As we come to the time for the closing of this centre of worship, we give praise and thanks to Almighty God for the privilege of witnessing in this corner of His vineyard over a period of 96 years. We pray that this witness may continue and grow in the lives of members, both past and present, to the honour and glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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## THE REMINISCENCES OF OBED WEST

- B. J. Madden  
Kingsgrove.  
October 1981.

Obed West was born in Sydney in 1807, and grew up in Pitt Street and then at Barcom Glen at Darlinghurst, a grant to his father. He lived at Barcom Glen for the rest of his life, dying there in 1891.

He proudly boasted in his old age that he had never left the Colony of N.S.W. in his whole life, and because of this was in his old age regarded as an authority on Early Sydney.

Articles by him were published in the Sydney Morning Herald and republished in 'Old and New Sydney' by E Hordern & Sons. No dates are given, but it was probably about 1882 (see Mitchell Library 991.1/W). There is also an article about him in the Daily Telegraph on 23 January 1888.

Obed West's reminiscences were never published. I was supplied with an extract by Mr T Michell of Ingleburn, whose great-great-great-grandfather Thomas Spencer West (older brother of Obed West) built Pembroke Cottage, now 9 Bennett Street Kingsgrove, probably in the 1840's. With permission of Mr E Marriott of Bowral who holds the manuscript, Obed West's references to the area south of Sydney are published here. The period referred to seems to be in the 1820's. I must admit that I was sceptical about the reference to Kingsgrove as 'a model farm, a very fine place', as I had thought it was rather neglected at this period, but in view of the other comments I will seek further evidence about Kingsgrove during Simeon Lord's ownership.

- B.J. Madden.

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The native name of the district beyond the Botany Road at Waterloo and beyond Newtown on the other side bore the designation of "Gooman Anne" and "Goomanamorra". Gooman Anne comprised the district on the east side of "Shea's Creek" and Muddy Bay, the former is the continuation of the stream running from the Waterloo Mills into Cook's River, and took all in on the south side to the waters of Cooks River. Goomanamorra comprised the district on the west side of Shea's Creek and Muddy Bay, and extended to a swamp on the east side of the Hon. Thos. Holt's late residence of "the Warren". It commenced in a straight line at about where the Illawarra Railway line crosses the Cooks River Road. I recollect the first farms that were established out

in this direction, the first was Mr DeVine's farm which commenced just past the Deaf & Dumb Asylum. It was on what is now known as the greater part of the suburb of Newtown. At the time I first knew all over the ground was thickly timbered with large Ironbark and Blackbutt and other hardwood. The old farm house lay nestled among the trees, and had a considerable piece of cleared ground around it with a very fine orchard. The old house lay about where the Revd. Mr. Jeffries house "the Retreat" now is or a little further on than this & just towards the Newtown Road. Mr DeVine got a grant of the land from the Crown and was one of the Superintendents of the convicts. The farm took in both sides of the present railway line. The place was so isolated at the time they lived there that they were once set upon by robbers and very siverly maltreated. They were (that is the old man & the old woman) very severely used, and so that they should not follow them or give any alarm they were both securely tied up in sacks. The robbers were never that I know of found out altho' some people said it was some of the prisoners who were under his (DeVine's) charge that robbed and ill used them for revenge.

Next to DeVine's farm and a little to the South commenced Nanny Badgery's farm. It was partly cleared and had on it a fruit orchard, and especially fine orange trees.

On the south east of DeVine's farm & running to the Waterloo Swamp came what was called "Sidaways Clear". Sidaway was a First Fleeter. This place at this time was deserted, but there was clear ground around it where wheat and other cereals in the early days had been cultivated. Farming however in those days was not a paying enterprise and the places had to be abandoned, in fact I recollect at one time nearly all the farms around were deserted and the houses abandoned, and then any one with any cash could have bought them outright for a trifle. Sidaways Clear is where all the brickmaking is now going on. Then came Mick Brennan's farm south of Sidaway's Clear bounded by the swamp and running up to the Cook's River Road. This place of late years was known as "Bown Park". From this part of Goomanamorra was a thick dense forest covered with scrub and trees, Ironbark, Peppermint, Black Butt & all kinds of gums etc. At this time there were no farms or anything beyond Brennan's down to the River (Cooks) but a cart track where carts went along to get firewood etc. There were numbers of wallabies etc. in the scrub which in some places was so dense you had almost had to crawl thro' it, and numbers of wild deer were to be found among it. They were some of the progeny of those liberated by Dr Harris of Ultimo. At this time anyone who had to come to Sydney with a cart or animals to cross either Cooks or Georges River had to go right up to the head of the Punch bowl to cross, and come in on the old Liverpool Road at a spot between the 8th and 9th milestone from Sydney. The farmers and others who wished to



cross to the other side of Cook's River had to cross by the aid of a log of a tree hollowed out and flat at each end in the same style as they hollow out the trunks of large trees for making drinking troughs at Public Houses.

Across the River where the Dam is now, and where Tempe Hotel grounds are, was a farm belonging to a Mr Packer, a publican who used to live in Pitt St opposite Hoffnung & Co's new Stores. Further westward along the River was George Tyrell's farm & he used like the others to cross with the hollow log, and above Tyrell was a man, a Sawyer named Burke who used to seel sawn timber. A.B.Sparke a merchant afterwards lived on Packer's farm, but he kept a proper boat and to save crossing his vehicles & horses had stables built on the Sydney side of the River. At this time to get to the place he had to drive along a deeply rutted bush track full of stumps & such like. Down below where the Dam is and down near the mouth of the River I have often seen upwards of 1/2 dozen black fellows in their bark canoes paddling in and out about the mangrove trees at night time torch fishing and spearing the fish principally black fish, black bream and mullett as they rushed out from among the trees, and in the day time I have seen them along the River laying prone in the canoe spearing flat heads, flounders etc. The torch was a bunch of grass tree rushes (dry) bound round with a piece of vine. They used to hold these in one hand over the side of the canoe, and when one burnt out they lighted up another. Just where the stream of water comes in (Lords Stream) at Mud Island, mus oysters were so plentiful that a boat load could be loaded in 1/4 of an hour. I do not however think that this Mud Island is discernable now the place is so altered. The oysters were so plentiful then they used to take them to make lime of the shells.

From Packer's to Georges River the only habitation so far as I know was Pat Moore's on what is known as Pat Moore's Swamp. There was another old place called Townsend's but it was deserted. Further westward there was Kingsgrove a model farm, a very fine place, built and maintained on the old English principle. It belonged to Simon Lord. There were some other small farms about belonging to Chandler, Silvester and an old nailer names Sparkes who son was afterwards known as the great fighting man Bill Sparks who was sent to England to contest a fight with the champion of England at the time. Kingsgrove was originally I think granted to old Captain Laycock.

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Excerpts from letter from E.P.W.Marriott of Bowral - 1981.

Dear Mr Madden,

The excerpt you have of Obed West's reminiscences is part of some material dictated by Obed West to his son-in-law, Duncan McLachlan, but never published. Other parts of this material cover Illawarra, and Camden, and I have the intention of including at least part of it in a book on the family at present being written.....

Obed West's recollections were published in the Sydney Morning Herald in 1882 and for about 1/3rd of the series called Old and New Sydney and later republished by Horderns.....A second series called Old Colonial Days was published in 1884 but not reprinted by Horderns. In that series Obed looked at the districts around Sydney but was never completed; Obed was then an old man.....

The recollections of an old man are notoriously unreliable in their timing. Obed, born in 1807, was recalling the things he saw in his youth, and not in the 1880's which was the present for him. He may have confused events which happened in the 1820s with those in the 1830s, but he swears that he saw Macquarie lay the foundation stone of St. Andrews, which was for so long forgotten..... He also describes the final rounding up of the wild cattle in the Cowpastures, which he saw from his farm near Picton.

So I think that although I would not like to state any particular date for an observation, the setting of his recollections was in the 1820s and 1830s.

On one page there is mention of 'an old nailer named Sparkes'. One is tempted to think that it would have been 'sailor'; but it is clearly 'nailer'. I can only think that it was an old slang word, perhaps rhyming slang for gaoler.

The point of interest to us in the family in the reference to Kingsgrove is that Obed's half brother had a 20 acre farm there in 1843-1860 and Obed never mentioned it. There was a row in the family which could explain the omission, but on the other hand, I think Obed was describing earlier times. Incidentally, in the family there were circumstances for accommodating a young couple & 3 children as soon as possible & I think Pembroke Cottage must have been built in early 1844. There was no need to build a wooden hut first when the brick cottage was itself very small.

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- E.P.W.Marriott.

OATLEY SALUTE TO ELECTRIC JUBILEE.

- St. George & Sutherland  
Shire Leader ... 3.3.1976

Hundreds of people came from all over Sydney for last Saturday's celebrations marking the golden jubilee of Sydney's electric train services.

Sydney's first electric train travelled from Oatley on March 1, 1926 and this year's commemorative ceremony was held in the D.D. Cross Gardens beside the railway station.

Everyone in the community was represented. The Minister for Transport and Highways (Mr Bruxner) was guest of honour; the Deputy Chief Commissioner of Transport (Mr J Trimmer) was ceremony chairman. The Public Transport Commission Band provided background music. Local politicians, civic dignitaries, railway staff and union representatives were among the official guests. Steam and electric train enthusiasts were busy with cameras, and children clambered in and out of the driver's cabin of a steam train waiting to take the official party to Central, after the ceremony.

The steam train and a 50 year-old electric train which travelled to the city five minutes later, carried some "special" passengers, including:

- . Mrs B Horsfield and Miss E Nicholls, both of Oatley, who were on the first train 50 years ago.
- . Mr E. L. Lawson, Oatley postmaster in 1926.
- . Mr F Brown, junior porter at Oatley, when the first electric train ran.
- . Mr J Davidson, of Oatley, who worked on the project in 1926.
- . Mr J. Elliott, whose father was one of the first station-masters at Oatley after 1926.
- . Mr J Forsyth, Public Transport Commission, archives officer, whose father was the foreman who prepared the first electric train.
- . Mrs N Davis, daughter of the first white man born at Oatley.
- . Mr Alan Bradfield, son of the late Dr. J. J. Bradfield, well-known as Sydney Harbour Bridge engineer but less known for a report written in 1915 on the concept of an electric rail service for the city.

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