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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

July 1982.

Dear Friend and Member,

The Annual Meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday Evening, July 16th, 1982, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS. 1982 - 1983.

Syllabus Item:

This being the Annual Meeting & Election of Officers, time will be the deciding factor. Mr. Ted Downs, one of our members, has kindly offered to take us on a short tour to:

"The Spice Islands, a brief visit to Indonesia".

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

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. R. Lee,
President.
Phone 570 1244.

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

Mrs. E. Eardley,
Sec. & Bulletin Ed.
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.

"It's better to sleep on what you intend doing,
than stay awake over what you have done."

..... 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.

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 Wollie 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:"
- No. 9 "Early Settlers of the St. George District" -- should be available later this year.

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 Settlers 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? We would like to thank those members who have contributed. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

Visitors are always welcome at our meetings.

SOCIAL NEWS.

The following outings have been arranged by our Social Secretary for your pleasure; we do hope Miss Row will have your support.

* * *

A Coach Tour to Gosford to visit "Henry Kendall Cottage" amongst other points of interest.

Date: Saturday, August 14th, 1982.

Meeting Place: Western side of Rockdale Station.

Time: 8.30 A.M. SHARP.

Cost: \$6.00 per person.

* * *

A Day at the Blue Mountains, to see the Rhododendrons, which should be at their best at this time of the year.

Date: Saturday, November 13th, 1982.

Meeting Place: Western side of Rockdale Station.

Time: 8.30 A.M. SHARP.

Cost: \$6.00 per person.

* * *

October long weekend Saturday 2nd, Sunday 3rd, Monday 4th.

Coach tour - "Taree and Thereabouts". Details from Miss Row, Phone 50 9300.
Bookings now open. Full details in Bulletin soon.

* * *

Also, a Proposed 3-day Midweek Tour of Orange - Bathurst and surrounding districts.
Suggested date: Wed. 13th, Thurs. 14th and Frid. 15th April, 1983.
Autumn is beautiful in these areas. Details later.

* * *

THE PARISHES OF "MINTAVILLE" ...

- Arthur Ellis.

*Presented at the Society
Meeting - 18th May 1982.*

The coming of the Illawarra Railway in 1884, brought a welcome fillip to land sale and home building at Arncliffe. Most of the homes were of the cottage type, but many moderately wealthy professional and business people also came and built their fine houses. Gibbons "Dappeto", Clayton's "Myee", Farley's "Cairnsfoot", Morgan's "Teluba" - still remain, with many others to delight those who wish to conjure up the 19th century scene.

Most of these have enjoyed some attention and recording by historians, but there is one which, it would appear, has hitherto received scant attention. This is "Mintaville" - No.2 Forest Road, Arncliffe. Built by Robert James Parish in 1887, and named for his wife, Annie Minta Parish - it was the home of Robert Parish and his family till his death in 1896, at the age of 65 years.

Born at Teignmouth, Devon, England, in 1831, Robert Parish came to N.S.W. at the age of 15. Whilst living at 65 Gipps Street, Paddington, he worked as a plasterer, and it would appear, became an excellent tradesman. No.65 Gipps Street is non-existent today. Gipps Street now terminates at Brodie Street, whilst previously it extended about 50 yards beyond Brodie Street, into land now incorporated in the grounds of the Royal Hospital for Women at Paddington. On the northern side of this spur, stood No.62, and on the southern side, Nos. 59, 61, 63 and 65. For this information I am indebted to Mrs Mary Lane at No.60.

At the same time, also living at Gipps Street, was a young woman - Annie Minta Cragg - the daughter of Robert Cragg, a rent collector of Fairy Hall, No.53. These two young people met in an atmosphere highly favoured by both, at church.

On Thursday 11th March 1858, the two were married at St. Michael's Anglican Church, Botany Street (now Flinders Street) Surry Hills, near Albion Street. She was 19 and he was 27. Their marriage was registered No.22.

Here started a long dedication together to family, work and church. They lived at 287 Bourke Street Surry Hills, and adhered to the Bourke Street Congregational Church, continuing this adherence whilst living later at 42 Botany Street, from

1873 to 1887. It was whilst living at Botany Street, that Robert Parish purchased some land at Arncliffe, intending no doubt, to build a fine house there. The land he purchased faced New Forest Road, between Sarah Clune's West Botany Hotel at Rocky Point Road cornerstone and the point where the Illawarra Railway burrowed through the rock beneath Cobbler's Pinch. This land had been part of a grant from the Crown to David Hannam of 60 acres, on 21st August 1833. Hannam's Grant now contains the whole of the centre of Arncliffe. It extended approximately within lines drawn "A" from rear of "Rosslyn" Hospital, East to West Botany Street, thence "B" north to a few feet short of the foot of Kyle Street, thence "C" north west to "Earl Park" site, thence "D" west to the intersection of Hirst and Bonar Streets, then "E" south to the first mentioned point at "Rosslyn" Hospital.

Thus Princes Highway, (formerly Rocky Point Road till a visit to the district by the Prince of Wales in the early 1920's), West Botany Street, Forest Road abbreviated from "Gannon's Forest Road", an early name for the modern Hurstville, and the Illawarra Railway, all run through it. Arncliffe Railway Station, is almost its centre. David Hannam was a son of Rueben Hannam, who was transported to New South Wales on convict ship, Admiral Gambier, in 1811. A brickmaker, he was set to work in the brickfields in the vicinity we now call Brickfield Hill, Sydney. Rueben Hannam conducted himself well and diligently and eventually became Overseer of Government Brickmakers. After serving a few years at this task, he petitioned the Governor to have his wife and two children sent out, and in this he succeeded. David Hannam was one of these children, and on becoming a young adult, he got his 60 acres.

The village of Arncliffe, at first centred on the flat land to the north of the present Arncliffe, and bounded by Cook's River, took its name from the Yorkshire town of Arncliffe, north-west of Bradford, through Shipley, Rylstone, Kettlewell etc.

As I said in the beginning, the coming of the Illawarra Railway in 1884, brought many newcomers, including Robert Parish.

By now Robert was a prosperous builder, and was surveyor and inspector of buildings for the Equitable Permanent Building Land and Savings Institution. All the land he purchased at Arncliffe faced Forest Road, and was part of what became known as D.P.1768. D.P. means Deposited Plan, and is the plan made by the Land Surveyor to minute measurements, and which is then deposited with the Surveyor General of the State, in order to facilitate effectively the sale, purchase, etc. of the said land. These Deposited Plans are kept, some in excellent condition, others not - and many on micro-film - at the Land Titles Office of the Registrar General in Sydney. They are often invaluable in historical research into succession of title, important to historians.

On 2nd August 1887, Robert Parish purchased Lot 15, D.P.1768. for 600.0.0 pounds from Henry Hudson and Charles Bown, who were trustees for the Equitable Permanent Benefit Building Land and Savings Institution. The titular owner had been William Frank Barker, who had defaulted on a mortgage from the said Institution, and the trustees sold his land.

On 6th August, 1887, Robert Parish purchased Lots 10 to 14 and 16, from John Mills Waddell of Petersham for pounds 841.18.4. It is from John Mills Waddell that we get the name of Waddell St. which forms the Western boundary of D.P.1768, and which in keeping with the "Great Australian Laziness" in articulation, has been corrupted to "Wardell" Street. Lots 17 and 18, the site of the present school, he purchased on 1st March 1894 from Richard Gant, for 150.0.0 pounds, the pair.

I have given you a guide to the lots on which the school was built. This is less simple in the case of "Mintaville". Robert Parish built his house in such a way, it sits on parts Lots 13, 14, 15 and 16. The present church is on parts Lots 10,11,12 & 13.

Extremely well and soundly built, "Mintaville" survives to-day, "as new". Stone foundations carry sound solid brick walls, skilfully and faithfully cement plastered externally, giving scope to that art Robert Parish had practised all his long working life. Almost 100 years have left the protection and embellishment of the facade and interior, virtually intact.

The house originally had a roof of slates incorporating a variety of decorative patterns in relief, but these have now gone to be replaced by the ubiquitous red-terra-cotta tiles of suburbia. The interior, now fitted to suit the purposes of a Convent, has four large rooms under the front main roof, on the ground floor and two large rooms and one even larger upstairs, plus a tiny attic at the top of a short stairway, with its interior wisely painted white, to catch all reflected light, since it has no light fitting. There is also a fine modern bathroom.

The long narrow portion at the rear incorporated a modern kitchen and offices on the ground floor, with several bedrooms upstairs.

It used to be said that the rear portion was an addition in order to suit the requirements of a Convent from 1911, but a 1910 photograph, taken from an elevated point west in Forest Road, shows the house in profile, as it is today. It also shows out-buildings, including 19th century wash-house (detached), stables and garden sheds etc. This was two years before the Nuns came, so perhaps that bit of legend falls down. After all, the Parish family were 2 parents, with 8 sons and daughters living and 5 deceased at the time of Robert Parish's death. Would not we expect him to have built a large house, especially with lots of bedrooms ?

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Close inspection inside and out, discloses no indication of joints of additions, which do not usually give themselves to untraceable "cover-up". One addition, however, is obvious to the most cursory glance, but this single misfortune, knew Robert Parish not.

Among the neighbours, none of them adjoining, were the Richardsons, of "Wickham" Rocky Point Road. This fine house stood just below Forest Road, till about 1955 when it was vandalised and demolished for the Housing Commission. Among the Richardsons, was a son John Ruskin Richardson, perhaps named for the famous Aft and Literary Critic, John Ruskin of 1819-1900.

Edith Parish became the wife of John Ruskin Richardson. A daughter, Lilla Richardson, was alive and well and living at Bowral only a few weeks ago. A photograph previously in my possession, given to me by my friend Mabel Holbeach, housekeeper to the Richardsons and giver of the furniture at "Lydham", showed several of the Richardson family in their garden, including a beautiful young mother Edith, with a young baby, probably Lilla.

In such a large family, with 3 daughters and 3 sons married, Christmas must have been a joyous occasion, but Christmas 1896, was almost certainly not. Robert Parish had for many months shown symptoms of diabetes, diagnosed by Dr Shewin of Liverpool Street, Sydney and Gordon Road, now Pacific Highway, Chatswood. On 28th December 1896, this grand old man died.

The Sydney Morning Herald of 29th December, page 1, column 1, carried the notice of his death. The following day brought funeral notices which appeared on page 10. These give what were, to many in that late Victorian funereal scene, a guide to some of the social mores of the age. No woman got a mention. There were notices from the 4 sons, with no mention of their wives. There was a notice from 3 sons-in-law, without saying who they were, since no mention of their wives was made. The widow was not mentioned at all. The funeral was at Necropolis, Rookwood, conducted by Charles Kinsela, at the Congregational Cemetery.

By January 15th, mention of his death appeared in "The Australasian Independent", page 3, written by Rev. J Hill, M.A. It offered great praise to Robert Parish and mentioned his ever loving and faithful wife.

His will was made in favour of his wife, entirely. Probate of this was granted on 18th February 1897 and numbered 12,830. Application No.9944 was then made by Annie Minta Parish, to the Registrar General to be registered as proprietor of the Realty, and this was granted and registered on 21st January 1898.

The Parish family occupancy of "Mintaville" was drawing to a close. By 4th June 1900, "Mintaville" and grounds were sold.

The new owner was Agnes Herd. She was the wife of Public School teacher, Andrew Herd. Agnes Herd purchased "Mintaville" and grounds on Vol.848. Fol.34, Dealing No.308520, whilst her husband was school teacher at Rockdale Public School. No sooner had the Herds moved in, when he was transferred to Marrickville. Would his wife have purchased a house Arncliffe had she had prior notice of his "move", and did the "move" to Marrickville, have any bearing on Andrew Herd's state of health? He had a short stay at Arncliffe, and died intestate on 25th November 1907. His estate was sworn at pounds 412.17.7, Probate No.41788.

Mrs Agnes Herd continued to live at the house which, during her husband's lifetime, had been given a new name. It became "Gormanston". I have not yet set out down that long dark tunnel with the head splitting beams, to find out why. Mrs Herd went off to live at No.2 Queen Street, in a house, long since demolished, and there we leave her for the present.

The next owners of "Gormanston", previously "Mintaville", were four spinsters. No! No! There was not a rush of Arncliffe eligible bachelors! The four women were nuns of the teaching order of St. Joseph, based at North Sydney. They became the new owners on 28th December 1910, fourteen years to the day since the death of Robert Parish.

Mary Molloy - Briget Howley - Veronica O'Brien - Mary Meskill - have left their signatures on transfer and dealing documents.

A Convent School was soon under way. In my collection of photographs, is one probably 1911 or 1912, showing approximately 40 children on the footpath in front of the Convent. No uniforms - they vary from "Bill Sykes" to "Beau Brummel" - from "Eliza Doolittle" to "Dolly Varden". One little girl would pass muster in any group of well-dressed children today. She must have passed for a real "mod" in 1912, 70 years ago.

During 1911 a foundation stone was laid in a building under construction as a school and church. This was the building some will remember, which bordered close to the Waddell Street boundary. It was of single-storey, brick, and had a high-pitched slate roof. Within a few years it had 2 sets of folding doors, which could convert the church to a 3 room school. "Bubs" and other classes for "littluns" in the centre, with 3rd and 4th classes at Forest Road end, with its own entrance at the head of some outside steps and "Burkos" (Sister Burkman) at the other end taking 5th and 6th classes. On Sundays the partitions were folded and the place became a church, with the altar at the end furthest from Forest Road. The priest was Joseph Patrick Rafferty. Three Masses on Sundays - 1/4 past 7.00, 8.30 and 10.00. Always a full house at 10.00.

Some names at School were - Farrel, Sweeney, Day, Carey, Lee, Dunn, Lahiff, Collins, Telfer, Finn, Hart, Payne, Boyd, Lewis, Bardge, McGann, Wooten, Traynor, Considine, Weddrein, Walters, Finucane, Earley, Macrae and a few others. And the Nuns were omnipresent! Spelling, arithmetical tables and exercises, composition, history, geography and music, ranked highly. This writer was there till 1928.

That old church and school combined has disappeared inside the present modern building, the steeply pitched roof came out when the shell of the present building had enveloped the old, to give a two-storey school.

In 1928, the old land holding of Robert Parish was re-surveyed, and a new land plan 23842, prepared by Hector Robb, an Arncliffe surveyor. Hector Robb was also the Scout Master and lived in Queen Street. His house, where he lived as a bachelor, with an aged father, had an eyrie on top, where he kept examples of flags, signals, ropes and knots, dear to the hearts of Boy Scouts.

The new plan left Lots 10, 11 and 12 intact, which with parts of Lots 13 and 14, all became Lot B, the site of the present Church with the round tower. Lots 18, 17 and a 3' strip of 16, carry the present school and the residue of Lots 13, 14, 16 and the whole of 15, became Lot A, carrying "Mintaville".

Since we are now at about 1930, it is time to remember Mrs Annie Parish. Early that year she attended the Congregational Union half-yearly Conference at Sutherland. Still keen and alert, she closely followed the discussion. She had been a member of the church for 65 years. She left her native Leicestershire, England, for Sydney when 14 years of age. "My clearest recollection of those days, is George Street" she said, "You could throw a stone there and not hit anyone. Men rode about on horseback, wearing black frock coats and bell-toppers. It is all very different now." Soon afterwards, on 21st August 1930, Annie Minta Parish nee Cragg, died. She had been attended by Dr Alex Sanbrook, and nursed by Nurse Wigzell, at her home in Linden Street, Sutherland. She was 91. She left 25 grandchildren and 27 great-grandchildren. Her second given name, Minta, was given to the fine house at Arncliffe.

By 1932, the new church, St. Francis Xavier was built, taking up most of the large playground. This year, 1982, will see the 50th birthday of that church, and it was the onset of this Jubilee Year which moved my friend Mrs McDonnell, or Molly Sweeney of school days, to ask me for a history. Molly gets 10 out of 10 for persistence and I deserve, 10 out of 10, for procrastination.

The scene is an imposing one, with the round tower church, almost certainly among the finest examples of precision brickwork extant, bricks pressed, burnt and classed at the Austral Brickworks, Princes Highway, St. Peters. Each brick had to pass scrutiny by Joseph Patrick Rafferty, the parish priest, the driving force

behind the building of the church. He appointed himself Clerk of Works and shrewdly co-opted others to assist him in this all important watch-dog role.

The round tower has its basis deep in the history of Ireland, Rafferty's homeland and the fine bell housed there had always a very pleasing note. (This Society was given a most interesting paper several years by Vince Saunders, on the Round Tower and its history.) Do we hear the bell to-day? Certainly not at Kogarah, where I live, though it could be heard there during the early years of its life, and for some years its thrice daily peal - 6.00a.m. 12.00 noon and 6.00p.m., besides giving notice to the faithful, served also as a local time keeper. At 6.00a.m. housewives lit the kitchen fire and shook sleeping husbands and older children. Milkmen, hearing it between the clip-clop of horses hooves running on the new bitumen roads, knew at what point of the "run" they should have reached. At noon, kids in school and labourers on the roads knew it presaged "dinner-time", and those toiling up Eden Street at evening, knew they must get through the door of the pub before the 6.00p.m. bell. It was all part of life at Arncliffe, and life at the Convent, which building adjoins the church. The Convent is a little aggressive in its own colour, a "lived in" house. Then comes the school, its facade seeming to simulate that of the Church.

And so should we not offer thanks to Robert Parish, who chose Arncliffe and built the subject of my address - "Mintaville".

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