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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

December 1982.

Dear Friend and Member,

The December Meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, December 17th, 1982, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Peter Sage presents: "Christmas with Music".

Supper Roster: Miss Dorothy Row and her many helpers, you will be appreciated.
This is our Christmas Get-together which we are all going to enjoy.

Ladies, the plates will be extra special, we know from past years.

Mr. R. Lee,
President.
Phone 570 1244

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

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

"Worry is putting today's sun under tomorrow's cloud."

"Don't despise the little things, a mosquito is usually more bother than an elephant."

..... Friendship Book 1971.

The President, Mr. Bob Lee, & Officers, wish you all a Happy Christmas.

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

It is sad to note the death of Mr. W. Dixon, a well known and respected member. Our condolences to Mrs. Dixon and family.

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"
- No. 8 "Early Churches of the St. George District"
- No. 9 "Early Settlers of the St. George District" - will be available at
at an early date.

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 - Sec., Phone 59 8078, Mr. A. Ellis - Phone 587 1159.

Book No. 9 - "Early Settlers of the St. George District" - is now ready for printing. We would like to thank those members who have contributed. Your efforts are greatly appreciated.

RENEWAL OF ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION FOR THE YEAR 1982-1983 was due in July 1982. If you have overlooked renewal of membership, and are desirous of receiving your Monthly Bulletin, we would be pleased to hear from you at an early date.

Eileen Eardley,
Hon. Secretary.

VISITORS ARE ALWAYS WELCOME AT OUR MEETINGS.

HERITAGE WEEK - APRIL 10TH - 17TH, 1983.

APRIL 13TH.

Afternoon Coach Tour - St. George Area - Historical Buildings,
Churches, Sites, etc. Guide - Mr. Arthur Ellis.

Full details as they come to hand. See Miss D. Row.

APRIL 15TH.

Monthly Meeting of St. George Historical Society.

APRIL 16TH.)
APRIL 17TH.) LYDHAM HALL will be open for inspection from -
10.30 a.m. - 4.30 p.m. (Saturday & Sunday)

BOOK NO. 9. "EARLY SETTLERS OF THE ST. GEORGE DISTRICT"
will be available for purchase, to coincide with
 ' HERITAGE WEEK '

ROCKDALE METHODIST CHURCH - JUBILEE - 1858 - 1908.

- Taken from -
The Methodist Hymn Book
- Submitted by -
Mrs J H Fisher - Caringbah.
1982.

THE BIRTH OF A NATION.

The territory embraced within the Rockdale Circuit is historic ground. Its eastern boundary is washed by the waters of Botany Bay, over which the white winged "Endeavour" glided on 28th April 1770, and lies within sight the spot where English speech and song first wakened the echoes of these hillsides as Captain Cook unfurled the "Meteor Flag", and claiming the land of the Southern Cross as England's possession, added to the British Empire the largest island-continent in the world. Eighteen years later, the first Governor in charge of the First Fleet, brought his squadron of eleven sail to anchor in the lee of the same shore, while he reconnoitred in search of a site on which to plant his floating colony; and eight days afterwards, in a cove of Port Jackson, building greater than he knew, founded a nation that was destined to become the one great English-speaking community south of the equator.

A NEW BRITANNIA IN THE SOUTHERN WORLD.

'Botany Bay', a name given to signalise the variety and wealth of the hitherto unknown botanical products discovered by Sir Joseph Banks on its wooded slopes, stood for many years in popular speech to represent the British Dependency of Australia, and for still longer remained a name of dark and dreaded import in the civil and penal records of England. It now describes one of the most attractive and popular pleasure resorts of excursionists from city and suburbs, who throng in tram-loads to the beauty spots and baths along its shores, or dance over its rippling waters in motor launch or boat.

AN ITINERATING CHURCH.

During the early years of colonisation, the growth of population and settlement depended upon the scanty and intermittent human stream of variegated tint, that flowed from the Old World. This, as it extended from Sydney, made its way chiefly along the courses of the Parramatta and Hawkesbury Rivers. But as the city grew and spread, movement set in across Cook's River and toward the western shore of Botany Bay; and in 1855, during the period of the Rev. Benjamin Chapman's first superintendency of the Newtown Circuit, a community of charcoal burners, wood cutters and others, whose associations and interests related them to the soil and to agriculture, had settled in the district, and presented the need

and the call for the establishment of religious ordinances. Of those who took the initiative in the endeavour to supply this need, the place of honour is given to two brothers, James and William Beehag, young English Methodists from an Essex farm, who had been led to make their home and seek their fortune in the wider spaces and freer of this country. Unlike too many Methodists and others, whose religion is such a tender and delicate exotic that it will not bear the rough experiences of transplantation to new surroundings, the Beehags retained the freshness of their own religious life and their sense of the value and need to their neighbours, as well as to themselves, of the means of grace which they had been privileged to enjoy. The leadership in this piece of Home Mission work seems to have been undertaken by Mr William Beehag, then of Newtown, and by his efforts a rudely constructed shelter of saplings, calico and ti-tree, with internal furnishings of corresponding character, was provided and served as the first Methodist house of prayer in what is now the district of St. George. Here Mr Beehag organised and superintended a Sunday School for the children, and the preachers of the Circuit supplied the ordinances of public worship for the elders.

This 'Bush House' as it came to be designated, was situated in what was then Whst Botany, on the eastern side of what is now West Botany Street, Arncliffe; and here for a time, the centre of our church operations remained. Two or three experimental removals were effected, before a permanent resting place was fixed upon; services being successfully conducted for a while on a spot now occupied by Iliffe's nursery; after that is what was known as the 'Iron House', on the lower corner of the present Rockdale Park, the dwelling of Mr Quirk, who, though not of the Protestant faith, cheerfully lent his home for Methodist services, thus showing a tolerance that has not always been a distinguishing characteristic of his co-religionists; and later still at a point in close proximity to the site of the present Church. So that three years before the opening of the first permanent Church, which dates from 1858, and of which event this is the jubilee year, Methodist worship had been organised and maintained in what is now the Rockdale Circuit, but which was then variously known, according to the particular locality intended, as 'Frog Hollow', 'Muddy Creek', 'White Gum Flat', 'Rocky Point', and such-like picturesque and suggestive appellations. And for those three years, like the Israel of old, dwelling in booths and tents, and moving from point to point, and in the face of much difficulty, the attempt was made by the earnest, self-denying and resolute men of that time to preserve in the community a witness and testimony to unseen and eternal things.

SETTLING DOWN.

The need, however, for a settled and suitable place of worship came to be increasingly felt and the way at length opened for the cherished desire to be carried out. A choice of locality and site was given by each of the brothers Beehag, tendering an acre of his land on which to erect a church. The lot offered by William was in the neighbourhood of the 'Bush House', in which the services were first held; that proffered by James was nearer the spot to which they had been removed. Mr James Beehag's gift was accepted and the unrivalled position occupied by our Rockdale properties is the abiding memorial to the generosity, foresight and enterprise of the Methodist pioneers of those early days. The Deed on which the land is conveyed bears the date of 18th August 1858, and the names of the original trustees as follows:

| | | |
|---------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| James Barker | John Walker | Barnabas Shaw Walker |
| James Canham | Benjamin Barker | William Bailey |
| Robert Dunlop | John Andrews. | |

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

In those days of primitive conditions and practical ideas, less was made than now is of the ceremonial and the spectacular; and no tradition or record is extant of any stone-laying function. But with an expedition that does not always obtain in the church enterprises of these faster days, steps were taken to put the newly acquired land to its intended use. The contract to erect a stone building, with shingled roof, 30' long and 20' wide, to cost 220.0.0pounds, was speedily let and completed; and on Sunday 26th December 1858, the dedicatory services were conducted by Rev. Richard Amos, a missionary from Tonga, who had that year returned to the colony. The inevitable tea meeting followed on Monday and in the notice of the event in the Methodist newspaper of that time, it is stated that "a large number of friends assembled. The day was fine, and the excursion to the bush was enjoyed thoroughly by all. After tea, addresses were delivered and subscriptions were handed up, which placed the chapel in easy circumstances." The new Church was regarded as the finest public edifice for some miles around; an estimate which does not appear unreasonable even now, when it is compared with buildings of contemporary date erected for similar purposes. Indeed, among the reminiscences of the occasion is one of a fear lest they had been too audacious and ambitious in their enterprise, and had built a Church that would never be filled.

AN HONOURED VETERAN.

The Newtown circuit at that time included such distant and outlying preaching places as Ashfield, Botany, Camperdown, Botany Bay, Canterbury, Moorfields and Peakhurst. The superintendence of the Circuit was in the hands of the Rev. W.A. Quick, who had

arrived in this country from England in 1855, and after a year in Maitland had been appointed to Newtown in 1857, and at the Conference of 1859 was appointed to the charge of Horton College, Tasmania. Mr Quick still lingers in honoured age, a supernumerary of the Victoria and Tasmania Conference, nearing the completion of the ninth decade of his earthly course, surrounded by love, honour, reverence and troops of friends, and shedding on the circle in which he moves the benediction of a life of rare spiritual charm and beauty. In answer to an inquiry directed to him touching the matter of this sketch, he writes:-

"I am unable to help you in compiling a history of your Circuit. Indeed, your letter written from the Parsonage at Rocky Point, is a surprise to me. It brings up the oft-quoted quotation 'What hath God wrought?' My recollection is a little more than a memory of rock, sand and stunted vegetation, among which were few signs of settlement. Those few had been observed by zealous local preachers and others, who saw in them the promise of a well-filled house of prayer. Even they could not predict a group of 'Ebenezers' and a Parsonage. Mine was but two years residence in Newtown, and my circuit was extensive, for one minister, its working was a difficulty. Rocky Point was, I think, 'taken up' towards the close of my time, so that I was there but a few times. I trust you will have a delightful celebration of your Jubilee. The Lord bless your assemblies. After 50 years' absence I cannot expect any of your people will have the least recollection of me. Yet my love accompanies this letter."

CROWNED LEADERS.

During the 30 years of its association with the Newtown circuit, Rocky Point was one of a number of preaching places now comprising the Newtown, Ashfield, Sbanmore, Rockdale, Kogarah and part of the Glebe Circuits. Of the "bright succession" of those who exercised the pastorate over it during that time - besides those already mentioned, and confining the reference to those only who have passed away - such names stand upon the record as those of -

| | | |
|----------------|-----------------|---------------|
| Stephen Rabone | Samuel Ironside | George Hurst |
| Henry H Gaud | Joseph Oram | George Martin |
| George Lane | James A Nolan | and others. |

Wise master-builders who watched over and directed the early growth and development of what were to become in the later years thriving and fruitful Circuits.

SUBALTERNS UNDER COMMAND.

In the development of this Circuit, as in the whole history of Methodism, a large debt is owing to the self-denying and ungrudging labour of our local preachers. The Minister of the Circuit could but rarely take Sunday appointments in the smaller and more distant places, and the work of carrying the means of grace and the message of the gospel to what were the back woodsmen of those days devolved almost wholly upon the local preachers. The names of men like -

Saxby Finlayson Butcher Dunlop
 Popplewell Bowmer and others,

have honourable places in our church annals of those early days. Of these, the sole survivor is Mr Donald Finlayson of Hurstville, who despite his four and a half score years, is still hale, retains a vivid memory of the state of perspiring agitation in which he underwent examination at the hands of Mr Quick for admission as a fully accredited local preacher, and loves to dwell on the happy days of toil of 50 years ago and more, when his Sunday round of appointments often meant a walk from Newtown to Peakhurst or Rocky Point in the morning, thence to Moorfields for the afternoon, and to Canterbury for the evening, and after that back to his home at Newtown. And such a round, trudged over difficult roads, was a frequent experience in those early days. To local preachers of such type, Methodism owes much of her place and power, both in the old land and in this.

A WORTHY TRIO.

Of the group of workers in the Rocky Point Church of that time, Mr James Canham, occupies a position of honoured pre-eminence. Superintendent of the Sunday School when the Church was built traditions are still preserved of his walking to morning school, carrying his lunch in his handkerchief to be partaken of under the trees on the church ground in the interval between morning and afternoon services, so that he might discharge the duties of his office and avail himself of all the means of grace.

Fellow-worker with Mr Canham for a time, and later his honoured successor in every good word and work, was John Andrews. Born in London, converted in his boyhood, led while still a youth to New South Wales, he continued for nearly 60 years a faithful member of our Church, for 57 years, of which period he was a local preacher and for 52 years a class-leader, for 40 years

secretary of the Rockdale Trust and for 23 years its treasurer, and for 30 years in unbroken succession, Superintendent of the Sunday School, first lay representative to Conference for the Circuit, and filling as called upon through the years, every office in Methodism open to a layman, his life presents a record of Christian service so honourable and so rare as to justify this minute particularisation.

Another outstanding figure of those days is that of John Bowmer. Removing from Ashfield to this locality, 46 years ago, as a class-leader in connection with the Rocky Point Society for some 25 years, and later up to the time of his death in 1903, in the West Botany Street Society - and from the commencement of its history, a local preacher of the Circuit - Mr Bowmer was one of the goodly band of stalwart and devoted men who gave of themselves, their service, and their substance with unstinting devotion, that they might build up and extend the Church that had brought to them the message of joy and salvation, and made them the bearers of the same good tidings to others.

MEN OF THE DAY'S MARCH.

Of others, sharers in the toils and successes of that formative period, the names of -

Morse Warren Colbourne Godfrey
Shelton Goode Wilson -

who have passed from earthly spheres of service, are cherished in grateful memory.

Of those who remain - Mr William Bray - fruit of one of the earliest revivals, in 1862 began to teach in the Sunday School, and who has continued to the present, a steadfast and faithful member and worker of our Church.

Mr Thomas Mascord, over 40 years ago the secretary of the Sunday School, and who with almost youthful agility carries the weight of his 85 years, snow of winter on his brow, but glowing summer in his soul, and

Mr Charles Napper, who in age and feebleness lingers with us, are held in honourable esteem.

SHOWERS OF BLESSING.

The fear that the Church would be too large was soon dispelled, for it became the scene of gracious revival and ingathering. In 1871, it had become too small, and a new building, the nave of the present Church, was erected at a cost of 600.0.0 pounds, making the original Church available for school purposes. In the quickly succeeding years the extension of the railway to the district, and the consequent growth of

population, necessitated the further enlargement of church and school buildings to their present design and dimensions, at an aggregate outlay of some 2,000.0.0 pounds, while at the same time it became necessary to provide commodious and substantial Churches at Arncliffe, West Botany Street and Bexley at a total of similar amount.

COMING OF AGE.

In 1883, the junior minister of the Newtown Circuit, the Rev. Joseph Bowes, was appointed to reside at Rocky Point, and in 1886 a division was effected and a new Circuit, with its dignities and responsibilities, was created - comprising Rockdale - as Rocky Point was henceforth to be known - Kogarah, Arncliffe, Hurstville, Bexley and West Botany Street - to which the Rev. Thomas Parker was appointed as the first minister. In the following year arose the obligation to provide for a married minister, and the necessity to erect a Parsonage; which important responsibilities were undertaken with courage and purpose, and the present substantial and comfortable Parsonage was erected at a cost of nearly 1,000.0.0 pounds, under the guiding superintendence of Rev. Joseph Monahan. Three years later in 1892, during the pastorate of Rev. Charles Jones, a further division took place by the creation of Kogarah, Hurstville and Peakhurst into a separate Circuit.

THE CHURCH THAT IS TO BE.

Over the Sunday School, with its memorials of zeal and devotion and its honourable history of useful service, one would fain linger were space available, and had not the recent publication of its own Jubilee record made extended reference necessary. In the extent and fitness of its equipment, and in the up-to-date methods of its instruction, touching young life at the entrance point with that most modern and most popular of school accessories, the Kindergarten, and at the exit point with the broader and deeper studies of its Senior Bible Classes, it takes a creditable place among the schools of its grade, an added prestige and attractiveness to the Church of which it is a part.

A NOTE OF PRAISE.

And, in connection with the Church worship, the quality of its service of praise, and the character, conduct and efficiency of the choir are noticeable and meritorious features, widely known and recognised, and speak beyond words for the knowledge, skill and taste of the capable choir-master and organist to whom the good effects are so largely due.

WHO'D HA' THOUGHT IT? WHO CAN TELL?

Thus from the small beginnings of more than 50 years ago, traced in this sketch, there has evolved not only a thriving church, but a vigorous, enterprising, growing Circuit, that ranks amongst the most attractive of our metropolitan and suburban appointments, and of which the official returns show:-

| | | | | | |
|-------------------------------|-------|----------------------|------|------------------|-----|
| Churches | 4 | Sittings | 1000 | School buildings | 2 |
| Parsonages | 1 | Local Preachers | 9 | Class Leaders | 3 |
| Members & Communicants | 213 | Christian Endeavours | 113 | | |
| Sunday Schools | 4 | Teachers | 87 | Scholars | 698 |
| Attendants on Church Ministry | 1000. | | | | |

Truly the wilderness and the solitary place has been made glad, and the desert to rejoice and blossom as the rose, and in the gifts and blessings which have attended and crowned the by-gone years of our history, we read the promise of the larger rewards which await faithful service, and hear the call to larger trust, courage and effort through the years towards which we move.
