



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,  
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

December 1983.

Dear Friend and Member,

The December Meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, December 16th, 1983, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General. Christmas Meeting.

Syllabus Item: Peter Sage will present: "Songs of Australia", flavoured with a touch of Christmas.

Supper Roster: Captain: Miss Row, and her helpers (of which there is never a shortage). Thank you ladies.

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 Editor.  
Phone 59 8078

Mrs. E. Wright,  
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Miss D. Row,  
Social Secretary.  
Phone 50 9300

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

"Co-operation is a word that's worthy of our thought,  
By that alone can we gain the Friendship long sought;  
Each one has their part to play, each one can hope to shine,  
But the one who leads most surely needs the other ninety-nine."  
.... Anonymous.

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

A cheerio for Members who are not so well - we hope to see you at the meetings soon.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The St. George Historical Society is pleased to announce that the following books, Nos. 1 - 7 written and illustrated by the late Gifford H. Eardley for the Society, have been reprinted and are now available. Books Nos. 8 and 9 have been compiled by Mrs. Bronwyn Perkins.

- No. 1 "The Wollli Creek Valley" (Reprint now available)
- 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" now available,  
Price \$4.00 plus 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 - Sec., Phone 59 8078, Mr. A. Ellis - Phone 587 1159.

2NBC-FM STERIO 90.1 - ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY SEGMENT.

Tuesday Evenings 6.30 p.m. - 6.45 p.m.

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|---|--------------|
| Tape 33 - 20th December, 1983 - Free Cream for Christmas Day and Sanitation.    | D. Sinclair. |
| Tape 34 - 27th December, 1983 - St. George - Patron Saint of England            | E. Eardley   |
| Tape 35 - 3rd January, 1984 - The Bexley Ladies' College                        | J. Faulkner  |
| Tape 36 - 10th January, 1984 - Fire & Fire Brigades                             | E. Eardley   |
| Tape 37 - 17th January, 1984 - Turner Bros., Kogarah                            | B. Perkins   |
| Tape 38 - 24th January, 1984 - The Fitzgerald Family and Fitzgerald Hill        | A. Ellis     |
| Tape 39 - 31st January, 1984 - Collecting Material for Local History            | B. Perkins   |
| Tape 40 - 7th February, 1984 - The Girrawheen Park, Earlwood                    | A. Ellis     |
| Tape 41 - 14th February, 1984 - Rocky Pt. Rd. - P. Geeves                       | B. Perkins   |
| Tape 42 - 21st February, 1984 - The Proposed Georges River Water Supply Scheme. | A. Ellis     |

WHERE TIME STANDS STILL.

- John Fairfax.

- taken from "Run O' Waters".

On your travels (even crossing the street is travel, for is it not an adventure of breath-taking possibilities?) you may have been lucky enough, from time to time, to have come upon some little glen or valley, or stream of infinite seclusion - a backwater which seems to have been spun in haste by the swirling waters of Modernity, or Progress, or the Machine Age, or High Efficiency, or whatever name that arch-imposter, Civilisation, might be masquerading under at the moment.

If the traffic of the Prince's Highway swarms past a few miles distant, if holiday-makers hastily unwrapping sandwiches and beer festoon her little lanes with the confetti of repletion, Jamberoo nods on in her own valley at the feet of the mountains.

She has remained thus self-sufficient and self-content, for a century and more; may she nod on in an untroubled dream as on a sunny afternoon.

The time is past when the journey from Jamberoo to Gerringong and back in bumping bullock drays over vague cedar tracks took three whole days. To-day the same journey could be made in under 40 minutes. Yet Jamberoo has not lost her spirit of repose.

A round-about date for the beginning of this village, which, one prays, will always remain a village, is the early 'thirties. Among the early settlers, if not the first, was Michael Hyam, a stalwart pioneer of the Illawarra, who was later to become one of the best-known men of the Nowra district. Hyam received a grant of 1,280 acres at Jamberoo, which he named Sarah's Valley. He was quick to see that cedar was a valuable commodity, but was not content to devote himself to timber alone, for he built a store and public-house, and established a tannery.

Other families came along into the rich valley, the Tates, the Colleys and the Waughs. D.L.Waugh married a Miss Hope, of Camden, and in honour of his wife and in compliment to himself, gave the name of Waughope to the fine old two-storey house which stands a mile out of Jamberoo. Waugh was chairman of directors of the locally formed Kiama Steam Navigation Company, which later became the Illawarra and South Coast Line, and brought its first steamship, Kiama, from England in 1855. He was an uncle of that village Hampden, D.L.Dymock.

Dr. Menzies was a notable figure, who combined the science of medicine with the art of farming. Across the little rivulet he built his charming Minnamurra House with its attic windows and solid cedar fittings, snuggled in against the hillside.

They got busy in Jamberoo in the 'fifties. There were saw-milling, flour-milling, brewing and brick-making ventures, and attempts to

grow and refine sugar. Even an ice factory was established on the slopes of Saddleback, but it met with the same fate as the heroic attempt to grow rice.

The Sawmills in the '40's at Woodstock were managed first by Captain Colley, and later by Mr. Heathorn, father-in-law of Thomas Huxley, the famous scientist. The mills were a thriving concern, and employed fifty families and "Government men". The flour mills were not so successful; neither was the brewing, though it was in charge of the Kentish family, Vidler, who should have known one hop from another. Undoubtedly, conditions were against them, and the raw material available was not of the right quality, for the beer would not keep and was used as blacking.

Perhaps it is as well that all these brave projects came to nought, otherwise Jamberoo would be a positive Port Kembla, and not the happy village it is to-day. The sugar-growing and refining also failed. The "Kiama Independent" published a letter written by the Rev. G. Mackie to John Colley, his brother-in-law, concerning his experiments with sugar-growing.

Colley experimented with sorghum (Chinese sugar-cane) and built a mill on the flats for crushing cane. The motive power was literally one horse, and 12 to 14 gallons of syrup were yielded in an hour. Mackie congratulated Colley on the quality of his sugar sent to the Melbourne Exhibition, saying that the sample was valued at pounds 35.0.0 a ton. "You now compete with Java", he wrote ecstatically, "even with imperfect machinery. Only try to think of that! With four tons per acre you have pounds 140.0.0. worth of marketable sugar. But suppose you had only two tons, still you have pounds 70.0.0 or 35.0.0 an acre. Will butter produce this? Will anything in the fair Illawarra produce this? Set forth in earnest then, if you are wise and patriotic men, in growing sugar."

He thundered pulpit-wise: "Don't be tempted to make rum or any kind of spirit, for, if you do, you are sure to repent of it, but very likely too late. Let me rejoice with you. Your triumph and success are mine."

There is plenty to do at Jamberoo if you are fond of walking and riding, fishing and shooting. The Minnamurra Falls are more beautiful and more original than most other falls, not because of the amount of water thundering down, but because to reach them you must walk through a vast, gloomy primitive forest, suddenly to come upon the falls swinging down like a silken scarf from the rocks above into a dank, freezingly cold chasm which is a cleft in the black heart of the mountain.

The paths are unobtrusively cut, and tak you first into a very Avernus of a place, with giant water vines clambering amongst the trees, huge fig trees like monster parasites, spreading their embracing roots and raising on high their cold wet arms like ugly voiceless sirens. Palm trees and ferns holdout the fans of their foliage, unstirred in the death-still air. Over-all and round-all creep the mosses and lichens,

stealing over the rocks and up the tree trunks, reaching onwards, ever and always with their tiny feathery fingers.

When you walk out of this under-world you follow the Baby Minnamurra mewling along after its terrible tumble down from the tablelands. You pass on the left of the path, a giant red cedar, the only good specimen of red cedar that I have ever seen. It stands there, a sentinel monument to the millions of its fellows which fell during the great Axe Age.

The land about the Minnamurra Falls is a reserve, as it should be. The authorities who care for it have constructed neat and unobtrusive paths and bridges. They have shown thoughtfulness and wisdom.

I would advise, after you have seen Minnamurra, to take the road which climbs up the mountain to Robertson. Do not expect a billiard table surface, because this was an old coaching road, and precious few vehicles seem to have passed over it since the last coach. Still, it is negotiable, and I have driven up it in an ancient car, boiling, bubbling and protesting. Stop half-way up and look at the view, because you will not see many better; and stop again just before the top, because here you may hear the lyre birds ridiculing every other bird in the bush. At this spot I have heard, in a few minutes, the currawong, the rosella parrot, the thrush, and the whip bird mimicked one after the other.

Let us return to where Jamberoo hides in her hollow amidst the mountains - to Jamberoo, the village which has always been a village. The houses and cottages in the straggling street have not the rustic beauty and charm of the English cottage, but then you would not expect it. The village church, however, puts a brave show up with its Norman tower and Norman doorway and ivy, thickly clasping the walls.

The houses may not have charm, but the people have. Charlie Sweeney is the village bootmaker, and his shop looks out across the street towards the football ground. On the days when a football match is played his verandah becomes a grandstand filled with eager and knowledgeable critics shouting advice and yelling with joy when, as is usually the case, the local lads are putting it all over their rivals.

Charlie Sweeney can look back down a long line of Jamberoo days, and what he has learned from them you can judge by a chat with him - much that is kindly, much that is humorous, and nothing of malice. He has shod Jamberoo for a good many years, and shod it well.

Then further down the street lives Mr Wood, the butcher. He has stood, four-square as he is built, to the world for over 80 years. He is a man who chooses his words well and can call a spade a particular kind of shovel is he wants to.

Interested in the sport of kings, he has owned and trained his own racehorses, and can tell of epic feats of horsemanship as vivid as

any ride they took between Ghent and Aix. He rode to Sydney on the mare Princess in 9 hours, with three-quarters of an hour's stop. Mick O'Gorman, noted for his fine horses, missed the train at Albion Park, jumped into the saddle, and caught it at Kiama. That grand old man, D.L.Dymock, arrived at Kiama Harbour to find the steamer disappearing into the blue, called for his horse and met the self-same steamer at the wharf in Sydney.

A race meeting in those days was a ceremony which started well before the drop of the flag. Owners and horses arrived several days prior to the first fixture. The owners saw to their horses, and spent the remaining time seeing to themselves. This ensured the festivities going with a swing, and the old racecourse, on the flats below the town, was the scene of many a neck to neck finish.

A practical joke in those days was a fine full-blooded gesture. Let me quote one story current in the district. The chairman of the local race club sat presiding over his committee. He had been entertaining, and had been entertained very heavily all day, and Bacchus handed him over to Morpheus as he sat in his chair. His head lolled on the side and he went to sleep quite peacefully. The committee carried on without him and completed all the necessary business. The secretary, a man of lively humour, never let golden opportunities slip through his fingers. He sat down and wrote an eloquent speech which he handed to the local paper as being the speech delivered by the chairman. It was quite a little gem of oratory, and the paper was pleased to publish it in toto.

The paper came out and the chairman rushed around to the secretary with a copy of it in his hand.

"Did I make that speech?" he asked the secretary, hurriedly.

"You certainly did, and it was, if I may say so, one of your best."

"But I don't remember a word of it. I don't remember even making a speech."

"Well, it's very odd not being able to remember a fine speech like that. I'll never forget it."

"That's a funny thing," murmured the chairman. "I can't recall ..." and he walked away pondering deeply.

The speech electrified the district. Complete strangers came and pressed the chairman's hand. It was quoted and requoted and quoted again. Even the chairman was impressed. He ordered extra copies of it, and sometimes he would chant the more brilliant passages to his cronies in front of the fire during the long winter evenings.

There are other charming people who live in the village of Jamberoo. There is Mrs Stewart, of Minnamurra House, the old home of Dr Menzies, which is still as charming and attractive as on the day of its completion, over 90 years ago, when the doctor proudly moved in. I suspect



Mrs Stewart of being a Scotswoman, because of her fine salty humour, and her hearty welcome, and because Minnamurra House is spick and span like a new pin.

Last, but not least, is kindly, friendly Lin Fredericks, Mayor of Jamberoo. He presides over his district, and is proud of it. So he should be, because if Jamberoo can win the heart of a stranger, as it has won mine, how strong must be the love of those whose history and interests are rooted in its soil.

Lin Fredericks is a stalwart man, and his ancestors must have been stalwarts, too, for it is on record that one of the Fredericks carried a bag of flour weighing a hundred weight from Bullen's store at Kiama to Jamberoo, a very hilly six miles. He lives at Waughope, the old two-storey house of the Waughs, which because it is built of pine, the staircase doors, and the wainscoting are all of good solid cedar from the Jamberoo mountains. From the house you may look out across the rich green paddocks, which, in days gone by before they were reclaimed, were known as Terralong Swamp. It is a good sight. In the spring the bower birds come down into the Frederick's garden, and steal blue flowers to take back into their bowers in the mountains to dance around.

Nod on, Jamberoo. You are a village, and please be it that you shall ever remain one. I would not that Ambition should ever mock your useful toil. I would not that anything should ever change the long swings which the road takes as it comes down from Stockyard Mountain, or the scene looking down upon you from the hillsides, the bright green fields folding into your creeks, the dark green she-oaks drinking the Minnamurra, the scarlet torch-lines of the flame trees which skirt your little lanes, and sometimes, isolated, burn amidst a lean platoon of sentinel palms. The hand of man has shaved the shoulders of your mountains, and sown the yellow patches of sorghum which match so perfectly the brilliance of the surrounding green. The hand of man has planted the tall, dark fir trees which half-cloak the house of God.

I would not that anything should ever change that scene of exquisite loveliness down the lane where the youthful Minnamurra chatters across a little ford, where willows droop their green traceries into the waters like naiads washing their tresses. I would not that any man should ever destroy that crickety, rickety wooden footbridge which sways and waves across the rivulet, or raise his voice in anger or even raise his voice at all.

Nod on, Jamberoo.

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- October 1965.

ST. GEORGE IN 1894.

It comes as a shock to discover that there was once a time when otherwise knowledgeable citizens of Sydney had only a hazy notion where Rockdale, Kogarah and Hurstville were. Moreover, Banksia was not then in existence.

The following press report, discovered by Mr. Philip Geeves, describes our home suburbs in the St. George District as they were in 1894, when the now defunct Australian Joint Stock Bank was Rockdale's only bank and Chinese market gardens supplied the green symmetry between Rockdale and Lady Robinson's Beach.

Down at the beach, Saywell's Hotel had been transformed into the first home of one of our Great Public Schools - the Scots' College (the Hotel had been delicensed for an infraction of the liquor laws ... see Municipal History for details) and the hotel parlour, which had once catered to the gargantuan thirsts of its patrons, was now transformed into a Presbyterian Chapel.

In those far-off days, when a home at Sans Souci was regarded as "a country residence" and Rockdale railway station was noted for its floral display, a journalist wrote this description of St. George's suburbs, as they then were:-

St. George's Electorate (1894) - Illawarra Line.

There are many thousands of Sydney people who know little or nothing of this one of the most beautiful and attractive of our suburbs, simply because it does not lead to one of the holiday resorts, for pleasure-seekers. Yet for beauty of scenery we are not aware of any suburb which excels it; and for attractive residential sites, easily accessible, at moderate rates, with frequent trains running punctually from Sydney at 5.10a.m. to 11.38p.m., and from Hurstville 5 a.m. to 11.5p.m., persons travelling on business or pleasure have every accommodation which Sydney residents enjoy. St. George's electorate commences at Arncliffe, on Cook's River, five miles from Sydney, and terminates at Hurstville, on the George's River on the south, bounded on the east by the shores of Botany Bay, and on the west by a continuation of Saltpan Creek, comprising an area of about forty square miles. The towns on the railway line are Arncliffe, Rockdale (with a tramline to Lady Robinson's Beach), Kogarah (with a tramline to Sans Souci), Carlton and Hurstville.



Arncliffe.

At this point we get clear of Sydney proper, with its continuous lines of streets, with their closely-packed houses, with back premises 12 by 12 feet, the hotbeds of disease, and get into the country proper, with its fresh air and breezes from Botany Bay, charged with life-giving ozone.

In this neighbourhood are many attractive residences within the reach of every class of society. There is a considerable elevation above the station, on the highest point of which is the handsome residence of Mr Barden surrounded by a verandah on the upper floor, with some enchanting views, including Botany Bay and Cook's River, with its new improvements and reclaimed land, which will become very valuable for manufacturing and other purposes. In addition to the residences there are several large landowners who have sites for sale. Campbell's Hill, for instance, has a high and commanding position; Dr. Clay Hill, etc. Arncliffe is one of the wards of the Municipality of Rockdale, to which it extends on the west side of Rocky Point Road as far as Harrow Road, where the Kogarah Municipality commences.

Rockdale.

Rockdale is the principal business centre of St. George's, and is divided into three Wards - Arncliffe, Rockdale and Scarborough, constituting the Municipality of Rockdale. It has an area of about eight square miles, and an estimated population of five thousand; has a Town Hall and School of Arts, with a good library. There are several first-class stores and business houses, and in the neighbourhood some very nice residences, with more or less ground up to six acres, well planted with fruit trees. There is a large number of market gardens, producing first-class vegetables, some of these being kept by the irrepressible and indefatigable Chinamen. The immediate neighbourhood is well adapted for fruit and vegetable growing, to which might be added fruit canning; it only requires capital and the right people. There are churches of different denominations, also public schools. A branch of the A.J.S. Bank; two hotels; a College for Boys (see advt. of Scots' College). A tramway runs, on the arrival of each train, to Lady Robinson's Beach, about a mile, where there are baths for both sexes. This could be made an attractive pleasure resort on the same plan as Coogee and Bondi, and ought to if taken up with spirit.

It is much to be regretted that many of the residents will waste their time and spend their money in going to Sydney to get bargains (!) when they buy the same goods on the spot at the lowest Sydney rates, and keep the money home; also, they will subscribe to the Sydney School of Arts, pay a pound per annum subscription and take all the trouble of going to Sydney to exchange their books, while they can get the selection from a good library on the spot for three shillings a year! Perhaps they want a free library as well as a free paper.

This is a good town to live in, as there are frequent dramatic and other entertainments, which could be supplemented by lectures, if encouraged. There is a latent spirit of enterprise in the people, but they are shy about supporting a paper run in their interests. There is an excellent hotel, the Royal, for the accommodation of visitors.

#### Kogarah and Sans Souci.

This Municipality is divided into three wards - East, Middle and South. It has an area of about five square miles, and an estimated population of four thousand; has a School of Arts and Public Library. It extends from Harrow Road to Oatley, and has seven churches of different denominations.

On leaving the station at Rockdale, the railway line is on the up-grade and although the ground is rather rocky, and not suitable for cultivation, it presents most charming sites for residences, with views at various points of Botany Bay, with a well wooded country intervening, and the charming little suburb of Sans Souci, to which a tramline runs on the arrival of the trains to Sydney.

We recommend our town readers to pay a visit to this locality, particularly if seeking a country residence.

The Moorfield Racecourse is an attraction, and there are many horses in training in the neighbourhood. This is one of our holiday attractions. The field Hotel has extensive stabling and the landlord as a sporting man will command a good share of support.

#### Carlton.

This is a little more than a railway station, but between it and Botany Bay there is one of the greatest attractions in the florists and nurserymen's grounds where the flowers which made the great display at the late exhibition of chrysanthemums were principally grown. A reference to our advertising column will give the names of the principal growers, and a visit to this beautiful locality will be a treat for those who take an interest in the subject, and will give them an opportunity of securing some beautiful specimens for their grounds. We regret that, for reasons stated in our last issue, we were prevented from giving a description of our late flower show, as we would have wished. The Royal Hotel at this place, kept by Mr Mitchell (see advertisement), is a first-class house which we recommend to visitors.

#### Hurstville.

This Municipality is divided into three wards - Bexley, Hurstville and Peakhurst. It has an area of about twelve miles square, and an estimated population of three thousand five hundred, being an increase of about seven hundred and fifty over 1890. It has nine

churches and four schools, a library and the scenery is very attractive. There are indications of gold in the neighbourhood, resulting so far in little more than the colour. There is some desirable land near worth the attention of investors.

To sum up. It is the general impression that the first step towards getting the several municipalities out of their financial difficulties, will be a Bill for Local Government to enable the municipalities to collect over due rates and force the land, now held by the speculators, into the market. In the meantime the necessity for retrenchment is felt very severely by those dependent on local work, and the refusal of government support in the shape of customary subsidies, leaves the municipalities helpless for the present.

We have to thank Mr George W Leeder, Council Clerk of Hurstville, and Mr Sayers, of Kogarah, for their kindness in furnishing information, also the Mayor of Rockdale, Mr W Taylor, for his valuable suggestions; and trust the publicity given in this article will be as we wish it of value to the electorate, and a proof of the value of a local paper. The floral display at this station is quite an attraction. Mr Hall, the station master, deserves a notice for his good taste.

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