

SPONSORED BY
ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Registered by Australia Post
N.B.H. 0335.

24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

MAY 1984.

Dear Friend and Member,

The May Meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, May 18th, 1984, at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Miss Beth McEachran, from the Hurstville Library, will tell of the benefits of the 'Hurstville - Rockdale Home Library Service'.

Supper Roster: Captain: Mrs.N. Lee, with Miss Row and Mrs. Buckingham.

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 Editor.
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.

"Discontent is simply a penalty for being
ungrateful for what we have."

..... Friendship Book 1971.

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 Wollie Creek Valley" (Reprint now available))	
No. 2.	"Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway")	
No. 3.	"Saywells Tramway - Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach")	Books No.
No. 4.	"Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway")	1 - 8
No. 5.	"Our Heritage in Stone")	
No. 6.	"All Stations to Como")	\$2.50 each.
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.)	No. 9 \$4.00.

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.

* * * * *

SOCIAL NEWS.

Miss Row, Social Secretary, has arranged, for your pleasure, the following outing, which we hope you will support, and enjoy:

Date: Saturday, May 26th, 1984.

Where to,?????? - By coach to Mount Victoria, then via Bells Line of Road through to Kurrajong, where there are extensive views weather permitting, then on to Windsor, which is a very old historic town, returning home approximately by 5.00 p.m.

Does this appeal to you? Then contact Miss Row, Phone 59 9300.

Time: 9.00 a.m.

Place to meet: Western side of Rockdale Station.

Cost per Person: \$7.00 (pay at May Meeting).

Bring your own goodies and don't forget the thermos flask.

2NBC-FM STEREO 90.1 - St. George Historical Society -
 Tuesday Evenings 6.30 p.m. - 6.45 p.m.

-
- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| Tape 54 - 15th May, 1984 - Footpaths in the old Municipality of Bexley - Part 1. | - D. Sinclair. |
| Tape 55 - 22nd May, 1984 - Footpaths in the old Municipality of Bexley - Part 2. | - D. Sinclair. |
| Tape 56 - 29th May, 1984 - First Provision of Mail Facilities in the Rockdale Area. | - E. Eardley. |
| Tape 57 - 5th June, 1984 - Street Names & Postal Facilities in the old Bexley Municipality. | - E. Eardley. |
| Tape 58 - 12th June 1984 - A History of Carlton, Part 1. | - B. Perkins. |
| Tape 59 - 19th June 1984 - A History of Carlton, Part 11. | - A. Ellis. |
| Tape 60 - 26th June 1984 - A History of Carlton, Part 111. | - B. Perkins. |
| Tape 61 - 3rd July 1984 - A History of Carlton, Part 1V. | - A. Ellis. |
| Tape 62 - 10th July 1984 - Some Produce Merchants of the Eastern St. George District & The Motor Cycle Clubs of the St. George District. | - D. Row. |
| Tape 63 - 17th July 1984 - Memories of Days Long Past at Kogarah Superior Public School. | - M. Callister. |
| Tape 64 - 24th July 1984 - St. Davids Church of England, Arncliffe | - C. Wilding. |
| Tape 65 - 31st July 1984 - The Napoleon Street Tram Stop, Sans Souci. | - D. Row. |
| Tape 66 - 7th August - An Old Time Journey to the Cooks River Settlement. | - M. Callister. |
| Tape 67 - 14th August - Samuel Schofield - A Pioneer of Rockdale. | - C. Wilding. |
| Tape 68 - 21st August - Paddy's Market Hay Street, Sydney, 1920 - 1971. | - M.D. Fleming. |
| Tape 69 - 28th August - The Colonial Medical Service Part 1, The General Hospital Sydney 1788-1848. | - M.D. Fleming. |
| Tape 70 - 4th September - Our Heritage in Stone - Book 5. | - M. Cumming. |
| Tape 71 - 11th September - Early Settlers of the St. George District. Vol. 1, Book 9. | - M. Cumming. |
| Tape 72 - 18th September - The Colonial Medical Service Part 11. | - M.D. Fleming. |
-

- Tape 73 - 25th September, 1984 - The Environs & Ecology of Nanny Goat Hill at Turrella - M.D. Fleming.
- Tape 74 - 2nd October, 1984 - The Rosevale Nurseries, Rocky Point Road, Cooks River. - M. Cumming.
- Tape 75 - 9th October, 1984 - Rockdale Methodist Church - Jubilee - 1858-1908. - M. Cumming.
- Tape 76 - 16th October, 1984 - The "Echo", October 16th, 1890. - S. Richter.

FLYNN OF THE INLAND ... (continued).

- Compiled by Allan Gill
The Sydney Morning Herald
 25th November 1980.

The Men Who Followed in Flynn's Footsteps ...

Fred McKay was the only man in Australia who could have followed John Flynn. This has been said so often, by so many different people, that it has to be true. He is a writer's dream of the 'typical' Australian, only there aren't many like him about. To yearn with him is sheer delight. To camp with him, I am told, is rapture. The gleam in his eyes seems to mirror the Bush itself as he tells some moving tale of service to God in the great outback.

After completing theological studies, Fred McKay, then 26, was sent to Southport, Queensland, where he began his ministry. He had met John Flynn on various occasions, including a meeting at a home missions rally, where McKay himself was a speaker. After the missions rally Flynn chatted to McKay in the street & invited him to join his team. "We talked most of the night, but I wasn't greatly interested in his work at that stage," McKay said.

Later Flynn came to Southport, & looked up McKay. "We walked down to the beach together & we sat down on the sand. Now I loved that sand & I loved Southport Beach. John Flynn took a handful of sand, & quietly let it run through his long fingers. He said, 'Fred, the sand at Birdsville is lovelier than this.' That was how he got me in his clutches."

McKay became one of the 7 members of Flynn's team, which was known affectionately as "Flynn's Mob". Each patrol padre covered an area the size of the British Isles. "Flynn appointed his padres for 3 years in the first instance & used to say, 'Go out to the Bush & if you haven't made a job of it within 3 years, we don't want you.' His exact words to me were, 'Fred, go out there & just listen to people.'"

He recalls with affection his first experiences of 'roughing it' - including eggs fried on a shovel.

There were many unexpected incidents. Although a Presbyterian minister, Fred McKay baptised Roman Catholic babies - with the permission of the local bishop hundreds of kilometres away. After one such occasion (there were several children, from tiny tots to early teens) the father sheepishly took McKay to one side, & said: "Now will you marry us."

McKay recalls: "It was amazing how the very name of John Flynn & the Australian Inland Mission carried a warmth & acceptance that guaranteed open doors. We didn't strike any scepticism. No one said, 'What's the Church about.' 'What are you doing here! We

were taken into the hearts of people almost immediately."

An interesting relationship, perhaps approaching that of father & elder son, developed between Flynn & the far younger McKay. McKay makes no secret of his feelings - "I worshipped Flynn."

In McKay's second year as a patrol padre he received a message that Flynn would accompany him on a patrol from Betoota to Birdsville. McKay was delighted. "He sat beside me in the truck & he never at any stage adopted a superior attitude or gave any indication that he knew more than I did. We got stuck in some sandhills. He was interested in how I tackled the problem, and I didn't discover until years afterwards that he'd been over those exact tracks in his younger days. He knew all about the sandhills but hadn't said a word. He was letting me discover myself & encouraging me to be myself in this situation."

In his later years John Flynn made no secret of his desire that Fred McKay should succeed him. There was a sad chapter in Flynn's final year, when the Board sought to retire Flynn compulsorily & suggested to McKay that he be nominated for the leadership. McKay resisted this move & told Flynn in confidence of what was happening. Flynn took it calmly & actually advised McKay to accept. That same year Flynn announced his intention to retire, but died before his intention took effect.

McKay was superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission from Flynn's death in 1951 until January 1974. In 1970 - an honour once held by Flynn - he was elected Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Australia.

He received police protection after a dispute over his decision to take part as Moderator in the service at Sydney Town Hall to honour Pope Paul VI.

Meetings of the Church's general assembly were conducted in a way very different to its counterparts in the southern States. On one occasion there was a debate, which became heated, on some aspect of Church government. An Aboriginal delegate suggested tempers could be cooled by 'downing tools' and performing a tribal dance. Everybody thought this a splendid idea. The delegates, McKay included, performed an impromptu corroboree.

McKay retired from the AIM at the age of 67 in January, 1974. No sooner had reports about this appeared in the press than McKay announced that he was taking another job. He became associate minister at St. Stephen's Uniting Church, Macquarie Street, Sydney & will retire from this post next month. During his long & varied ministry he has made friends among the highest & humblest in the land.

He preached at the official funeral of Sir Robert Menzies - fulfilling a request from the former Prime Minister himself - but is the same "Padre Fred" whether in Melbourne or Marble Bar.

Fred McKay was succeeded at the helm by Rev Max Griffiths, who became at 47, the 3rd Superintendent of the Australian Inland Mission. The press reported that he had the craggy face & looks that went with the part. While Griffiths was lobbying support for a hospital project in Western Australia, the State Premier, Sir Charles Court, once told him: "You've got the jaw for the job."

He was previously minister of St. Aidan's in the Melbourne suburb of NORTH Balwyn, which he described as "large & stimulating - definitely in the sherry belt - as far removed from Andamooka as chalk & cheese." His city friends frequently ask him how the new job differs from the old. "I tell them there's no church, that is no buildings, so you can't have a ladies' guild & things like that. The padre is totally related to visiting people who live in extreme isolation, & to do that means all his journeys are virtual expeditions. Denominationalism doesn't play much of a part in the outback. Therefore, the padre's first job is to offer himself as a friend, a helper & counsellor to every person along the way. This takes time because outback people do not jump immediately into a relationship with the first person that comes along. What he has to do is to convince people that he is concerned for them & that he can be persuaded to do things for them."

He is a man of exceptional energy, persuasive, professional, & certainly able. He can be both calm & volatile, diplomatic & blunt. He is constantly on the move - as might be expected of a man with the biggest 'parish' in Australia. The former Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. Coggan, said to him, during his visit to this country: "So you're the fellow who sleeps in a different bed each night." Griffiths comments: "I believe that if I were to sit in the Sydney office all the time, I would not only go mad, but I would lose the feel of the outback."

While visiting Perth, he made a call to Fitzroy Crossing in the Kimberleys. The person at the other end said, "It's 48°C & the humidity is about a million." Griffiths explains: "When you are there, you know what that's like. A week or so later you think you know what it's like, but you don't really feel what it's like."

Griffiths stands in Flynn's shoes, but finds the aura of the founder a hindrance as well as a help. He looks to the present for his inspiration & is impatient with those who dwell excessively on the mystique of Flynn & the mission's past.

Griffiths himself personifies in his dress & habits the changing environment in which the mission operates. When in the 'new outback' of the mining camps, he is given to wearing shorts & hard hat, rather than the suit, collar & tie of John Flynn.

Like Flynn, however, he is a skilled lobbyist. He is an astonishingly good mixer, regarded by stockmen & Premiers as a 'good mate'. He can be both dignified & informal. The latter trait was illustrated in

the aftermath of Cyclone Tracy, when, after toiling for 24 hours & feeling sticky, muggy & "pitch black from assorted filth & grime" when his colleague, Doug McKenzie, & Major-General Alan Stretton, Head of the National Disaster Organisation, decided they needed to take a shower. There was no electricity (therefore, no hot water). While they were pondering the problem, the skies opened & torrential rain descended on Darwin. At Griffith's suggestion, the 3 men stripped naked, grabbed bars of soap & ran out into the road. As they showered in the main street of Darwin, Griffiths led the trio in a rendering of Onward Christian Soldiers.

In the Footsteps of Flynn ...

Flying into Oodnadatta, you can just make out the line of the "Ghan" railway below. It cuts across salt pans, "lakes" that rarely know water, scrub & desert. As an Englishman, I felt I had arrived at last in the back of beyond.

My visit was part of an 8 day trip to see how some of the places pioneered by John Flynn are faring today. With me were the Rev. Max Griffiths, General Secretary of the Uniting Church National Mission, Pat Kavanagh, an ABC Television Producer & Neville Richens, our amiable & long-suffering pilot.

When the plane taxied to a halt a stone's throw from Oodnadatta's pub, the grandly-named Transcontinental Hotel, Max Griffiths sent me to fetch a bottle of wine for our dinner hosts. He suggested that I go into the pub alone - it would help me to "savour the atmosphere." Inside was like a movie set. Some Aborigines were fighting in one corner, & tough-looking outback characters in the other. Each group of drinkers surveyed me as if I were a visitor from Mars. There was a slogan "AIM high" on the wall. I believe that at Christmas drinkers throw coins in the air, hoping they will land in a cup on a ledge over the door - thus raising funds for the mission.

A gentle but persistent elderly Aboriginal came up to me, interrupting my musings, & drew me in conversation. Bobby - I don't think he has another name - is one of the town's characters. He is a former black tracker who quotes Shakespeare & has a curious turn of English, believing that all the world's ills are caused by 'problematical indifference.' Conversation with Bobby was made difficult by the barman's way of dealing with customers' empty bottles. He smashed each one on the floor with a loud crash. While I was wondering how to extricate myself from yet another monologue about problematical indifference, Max Griffiths came in & rescued me.

Oodnadatta reeks of associations with Flynn. The centre was for many years the end of the line for the "Ghan" railway & Bruce Plowman & other veteran padres of the AIM made their camel sorties from here. My visit to Oodnatta occurred 3 months before the line was to be re-routed. I chatted to the station ~~master~~, Tony Dipple, whose job becomes redundant as of today. He is a grand character, who was in Darwin for 10 years before the Australian National Railways sent him to "Oodna". "It's a great job," he said. "The blokes in the railways

forget you're up here..." Our conversation was interrupted by the arrival of the "Ghan" itself.

The train is long & the track is open, which creates problems. "Tourists come in ... they bounce off the train. I don't even know if they've paid. It's a job to find them sometimes."

The police station at Oodnatta also has claims to fame. Its staff of 4 constables, a senior constable 1st class & a 1st grade sergeant over the biggest police patrol area - 300,000 sq.km - in Australia & probably in the world....

In Oodnatta, nearly 70 years ago, John Flynn established the first AIM Bush nursing home. The first sister-in-charge was described by admirers as "The little white angel of the north". Flynn judged, correctly, that the project would lend visibility to Christian concern. "Never let people say 'good enough for the Bush'," he wrote to a friend. "The Bush must be treated with as much respect as the city, & the people coming from away back need all the love & the things which speak of love, that we can give them." Oodnatta Nursing Home graduated to the status of a fully registered hospital in 1951. In 1971, it was completely reconditioned through a joint Government & community effort.

Aboriginal health education is an important part of the work of the Uniting Church National Mission. Lynnette Craig, who is known as "Jim", is community health sister at Oodnatta, which has a population of about 50 Europeans & 150 Aborigines....

Our outback journey also took us to Birdsville, which has a population of about 80, of whom 15 are whites. The sign at the airstrip reads "Birdsville International Airport". Birdsville has been described as the front door of the N.T. & the back door of Queensland. The Birdsville Track is its landline, & the Simpson Desert stretches away to the west. In its hey-day it had 3 hotels, a Customs & excise yard, Indian restaurant, cordial factory & a Chinese market garden. It now has a school, a famous pub, cinema/communal hall, & a mission hospital with an Old Timers' annexe.

Focal point of Birdsville is the hospital. It is staffed by 2 young nursing sisters, Beth Brentnall, whose father is a Uniting Church minister, now serving at Ryde, & Jane Walker from Stafford, England... The two nursing sisters operate in a traditional working environment, basically unchanged since the days of Flynn. One goes out on patrol, while the other stays & looks after the hospital & clinic. Patrols are made to Bedourie, 200 km north of Birdsville, & about a dozen homesteads, stations, & mobile camps. The transient workers - mainly fencers - at the camps love their visits. Both have to dig vehicles out of the mud, deal with the sick & bereaved, & attend to suicides. They have treated adults & children, dogs & cats.... Soon after I arrived two large mail sacks were dumped in the doorway. It seems the job of postmistress also belongs to the nursing sisters.

Alice Springs, at the heart of Central Australia, seemed an appropriate point for me to end my tour. I found it a lively, attractive town, & was fascinated by its many associations with John Flynn. The Rev. Bruce McKane, Centralian Padre, took me on a tour of the Flynn Memorial Church. It is a fascinating building. Just outside are miniature plaques to inland heroes, many of whom, at the time the memorials were erected, were very much alive....

Next to the church is Adelaide House, where the mission built the first hospital in Central Australia. It is now classified officially as a building of historic interest. Flynn himself assisted in the construction of the nursing hostel, as it then was.

Another link between the mission & Alice Springs is St. Phillip's College, a residential centre for about 60 boys & girls from all parts of the outback. It provides boarding accommodation for children who, for the most part, attend lessons in Government schools..... Students come from Oodnadatta & Arnhem Land, the Kimberleys & Cape York Peninsula.

For the discerning visitor to Alice Springs, a key attraction is Old Timers. According to Max Griffiths, Old Timers is one of the best things the mission has ever done. Old Timers - the word "homes" has been removed from the title - was an early dream of John Flynn, but other pressures forced it to be postponed. Flynn's aspirations were simple. "We do not want an institution," he had said, "just a place alongside the creek where old timers can spend their leisure in their own way." The uprooting of old bushmen by World War II revived the project, albeit on more ambitious lines. Several residents of Old Timers knew John Flynn personally. Among them is the Rev. Arthur Cottrell, who recalled his 25 years as a patrol padre in the Kimberleys. "The thing that sticks with me, & always will, is the tremendous welcome that there always was - & still is - for the patrol padre. To this day the mission is still associated with John Flynn, & wherever you go you will find someone who will mention his name."

The Wily Ways of John Flynn ...

Flynn had an interesting technique in public relations. According to the Rev. Scott McPheat, author of John Flynn Apostle to the Inland, "In consulting busy men Flynn went to great pains to avoid thrusting himself upon them." The Rev. Arch Grant, a veteran patrol padre, told me: "He would use an oblique approach. If he wanted to see you, & ask a favour, he would probably do some research on where you had your lunch & would just happen to be there. He might then bump into you as you were going out to pay the bill. He would walk out of the restaurant with you & on the way, ask you a question as if it was the last thing he intended to do.".....

An ABC television documentary about Flynn, to be screened in the New Year, is called "The Great Encourager". The title was inspired, in

part, by a letter about Flynn written by a friend which said: "It's not what he does, fine as that is, it's what he makes you do. You listen to him thinking what an impractical visionary he is & before you know where you are, you are helping him do it."

Flynn was aware of The Bulletin caricature of a "man in a clerical uniform with a dog collar, a shovel hat, carrying an umbrella & soft from the neck up." He took pains to ensure that he & his padres were the opposite, helping with well-sinking, branding, carrying building materials, repairing machinery, filling tax forms, writing business letters & pulling teeth.

Flynn spent money on presents to people, in the cause of fostering good relations, dressed well, & (when in cities) stayed in hotels rather than a manse. In his hotel room, he would hold court at impossible hours. Even after his marriage in 1932 (he was then 51), it was some time before Mrs Jean Flynn could entice her husband to live anywhere else than in his beloved Metropole.... He was a member of the Commercial Travellers' Association - the only minister of religion to be so; despite a rule that jockeys & ministers or eligion couldn't be members.

All these traits fed ammunition to his critics, though in reality he cared little about worldly good & possessions. When he died he left an estate of a mere pounds 2,900.

Newly-Named Missions ...

In June 1977, the Uniting Church in Australia was formed, comprising the former Methodist Church and major elements of the Presbyterian & Congregational Churches.

A property commission - with both "continuing" and "uniting" Presbyterian members, under a neutral (Anglican) chairman - was set up to divide Presbyterian assets between "continuing" Presbyterians & the Uniting Church. This commission awarded property and assets of the Australian Inland Mission to the Uniting Church, less \$106,000 to the "continuing" Presbyterians as compensation. The Presbyterians continued to use the name, Australian Inland Mission.

There were now two bodies using the same name, leading to serious complications, not least of which was that of how to treat bequests & donations made payable to the AIM, but without further explanatory detail. The Uniting Church took the matter back to the property commission, which said, that it was not prepared to state categorically that "a name is property" but if this should be the case, it was awarded to the Uniting Church. The matter was taken to the NSW Supreme Court but was settled out of court early this year.

The Uniting Church body adopted the name Uniting Church National Mission. Where appropriate, the words "Fronteir Services" are added.

The Presbyterian Church uses the title Presbyterian Inland Mission. The name Australian Inland Mission - disappeared.
