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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.
December 1984.

Dear Friend and Member,

The December Meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, December 21st, 1984.
Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.
Business: General. As this is our Christmas Meeting business will be kept to a minimum.

Syllabus Item: Peter Sage has promised to entertain us with excerpts of 'The Great Train Festival', as seen through Peter's eyes, possibly also a few other 'Bits and Pieces'.

Supper Roster: Miss D. Row and all who can help.

Ladies, this is Christmas. What a joyous night, and what a lovely supper ???

Mr. L. Abigail,
President.
Phone 599 2363

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.
50 9300

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

An Antidote For Worry.

If times are bad and you feel blue, Think of others who worry too,
Just because your trials are many, Don't think the rest of us haven't any.

Anonymous. Friendship Book 1974.

A VERY MERRY CHRISTMAS TO ALL, AND PLEASE KEEP WELL.
PRESIDENT, MR. LAURIE ABIGAIL, AND ALL OF US.

BEST WISHES FROM YOUR

A cheerio to our friends who are not so well, and our best wishes for a speedy recovery.

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 Wolli Creek Valley" (Reprint now available))	Books Nos.
No. 2.	"Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway")	1 - 8
No. 3.	"Saywells Tramway - Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach")	\$2.50 each.
No. 4.	"Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway")	<u>Plus Postage</u>
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")	No. 9
	Price \$4.00 <u>plus postage.</u>		\$4.00.

For your copy of the above books, please contact one of the following:-

Miss B. Otton - Phone 59 4259 (after 8 p.m.)

Mrs. E. Eardley - Sec., Phone 59 8078.

Mr. A. Ellis - Phone 587 1159.

Society Books, as above, available at each Monthly Meeting.

According to the State Rail Authority displays for the Centenary of the Opening of the Railway to Hurstville, Hurstville was named after Hurst in Lancashire.

I disagree with this because of my research, while the President of the Hurstville Historical Society, for the Centenary of Hurstville Public School in 1976. I found that the name was first used by Mr W McIntyre, Inspector of Schools, on 10 January 1876. The district had been known as Gannons Forest for many years but for some reason, Mr McIntyre did not use this name for the proposed public school. His suggestion of 'Forestdale' was rejected and he then suggested 'Hurstville', which I believe was coined to maintain the association with the forest, with the word 'Hurst' used with the meaning of a grove of trees or a wood.

I could find no evidence of a link with Hurst in Lancashire, either by Mr McIntyre or any other person. Nor could I find any evidence to support another suggestion frequently made that the district was named after a Rev. Hurst.

However, if any reader can provide firm suggestions I will be happy to undertake further research.



B J Madden

THE LATE CLARENCE WILLIAM NAPPER

On 31st October, 1984, a little bit of old Rockdale died when Clarence William Napper, ex produce merchant, alderman, sportsman, churchman and former Senior Vice President of the St. George Historical Society, passed to his reward at the age of 97.

"Will" Napper was the grandson of pioneer market gardener, Charles Napper, who settled on the site presently occupied by the Elizabethan Bowling Club in 1857.

Charles Napper had nine children, the second of whom, James, married Mary Ann Bowmer and commenced the produce store which became synonymous with the suburb of Rockdale for nearly 70 years.

James Napper was Will Napper's father and was joined in the produce business by his son in 1911.

Will Napper was not only a man of business and enterprise but a man who had a strong commitment to his church, his family and his district. For more than 60 years he was a steward and trustee of the Bay Street Uniting Church and his home at the junction of Frederick Street and Linwood Avenue, which he shared with his devoted wife Lily, was long referred to as "Friendship Corner" as he carefully tended his garden and exchanged pleasantries with all who passed his way.

In 1937 he followed his grandfather, one of the Municipality's first Aldermen, by being elected to the Rockdale Council where he remained a respected Member until a severe heart attack caused his retirement in 1950.

He became a foundation member of the St. George Historical Society in 1962 and remained as its Senior Vice President until advancing years caused him to move into a Nursing Home in 1978.

But above all else Will Napper was a gentleman - a man of education and culture, a man of unbending principle, a man with high moral standards and a man with an all encompassing love of the district in which he spent his entire life and the people who comprised it.

Those of us who were privileged to be numbered among his friends will long remember his old world courtesy, his gentleness and kindness and his fund of amusing anecdotes and will count ourselves very much the richer for having known him.

(Alderman) R.W. Rathbone

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

Tape 78	-	30th October, 1984	-	S.M.H. Historical Items Gallery by the Sea Just Part of Calcutta.	-	S. Richter
Tape 79	-	6th November, 1984	-	The Governor Bows Out Sir Samuel McCaughey	-	K. Rowsthorne
Tape 80	-	13th November, 1984	-	Changes Galore in a Century of Fire Fighting-Colonial Cabinet.	-	S. Richter
Tape 81	-	20th November, 1984	-	A Gem of Architecture Clearing the Forest and Henry Kendall	-	K. Rowsthorne
Tape 82	-	27th November, 1984	-	Of Interest - Carlton Railway Station, Saywell's Tramway, Early Surveys and Tenders, Sydney Square	-	S. Richter
Tape 83	-	4th December, 1984	-	Extract from Propellor - October, 1934 - When Kogarah Was Bush & Old Man Mile Posts	-	A. Ellis
Tape 84	-	11th December, 1984	-	History of the Peares in Australia	-	D. Sinclair
Tape 86	-	18th December, 1984	-	Old Kogarah Township	-	A. Ellis
Tape 87	-	25th December, 1984	-	Flynn of the Inland (continued)	-	K. Rowsthorne
Tape 88	-	1st January, 1985	-	I Remember Old Arncliffe	-	A. Ellis
Tape 89	-	8th January, 1985	-	Robert Sargent and His Wife, Agnes Maria Peare	-	D. Sinclair
Tape 90	-	15th January, 1985	-	The St. George English Rifle Regiment.	-	T. Allison
Tape 91	-	22nd January, 1985	-	Miles Franklin - Authoress	-	S. Cran

THE PARRAMATTA RIVER SERVICE. (Part 2)

- Vaughan Evans
Friday 15th June 1984

Readers will recall having left Part I of this paper with the complaint from 'An Inhabitant of Parramatta' that the boat trip from Sydney to Parramatta in June 1803, had taken 14 hours instead of the usual 4-5 hours.

It may have been a mere coincidence that, less than 2 weeks after this letter was published, a Government Order was issued to tighten up the terms of licencing, as follows:

1. The proprietors to enter into a bond of £50.0.0 and 2 securities of £25.0.0 each.
2. The boats were to be kept tight, furnished with at least 4 oars - 'in case the passengers might wish to assist in the rowing' - and with 1 mast and sail.
3. Boatmen were ordered to treat the passengers with civility.
4. A bell was to be rung at the Hospital Wharf, Sydney, and at the Parramatta Wharf half an hour before the departure of a boat.
5. The boats were to leave Sydney at the first low water, and Parramatta at the first high water between sunrise and sunset.
6. The boatmen were to stop no longer than 10 minutes at any one place unless from necessity.
7. Passage-boats were not allowed to go alongside any vessel without acquainting the wharf-ringer.
8. A record was to be kept of all parcels booked, for which the booking fee of 1 penny made the proprietor liable for delivery.
9. The fares were specified for passengers at 1/- still, and the freight for a variety of goods. The hire of the whole boat was now set at £1.1.0, or one guinea.

These regulations were commented upon very favourably by the Editor of the Sydney Gazette a week later, when he wrote ... Upon the whole there can be little doubt of these boats now becoming useful, whereas they have hitherto been only nominally so ...

It is of interest that there are copies of 2 of the earliest recognizances arising from this Order, both dated 11 July 1803, which are readily available in the records.

One is in the name of Ann Marsh of Sydney and the other in the name of Thomas Halfpenny of Parramatta. Unlicensed persons who acted as passage boatmen were liable to a fine of £2.0.0.

It is my opinion, that every boatman worth his salt would be able to find many reasons of necessity why he should stop for at least 10 minutes, at one particular haven - that of James Squires - whose public house, "The Malting Shovel", at Kissing Point, was famous from an early date in the 1800's.

The article noted that the Order had been amended in that the boats were to leave precisely at 11 in the forenoon, whatever the state of the tide - which must have been very hard on the boatmen when they had to breast the current for the whole journey.

In that same issue of the Gazette, Ann Marsh advertised requesting payment of passage money or freight, before the boat left the wharf.

It is evident from a perusal of the table of fares and freight that the size of the passage-boats had increased since their first appearance in 1793. John Harris, the Naval Officer, placed the following in the Gazette in October 1803 -

... A Capital English Wherry to be sold by Private Contract: nearly 21' keel, and well-adjusted to the business of a passage-boat, together with masts, sails and oars complete ...

In the following January, the Gazette printed a letter from someone who signed himself - "A Frequent Passenger" - urging the proprietors to fit a tilt, or awning. One can sympathise with any passenger having to endure the glare of the summer sun in his eyes for 4 to 5 hours, on the way up the river.

In September 1804 it was the turn of a passage-boat proprietor from Parramatta to write to the Gazette concerning a problem which may perhaps, serve as an illustration of the casual way in which business was conducted in those days. He wrote -

... I beg leave .. to recommend that persons who design sending parcels to or from Sydney and Parramatta by the passage-boats do either use the precaution of having them regularly booked, or else affix labels, whereby they may be delivered to none other but the persons for whom they are actually intended. This would at once prevent the possibility of dispute on delivery, for it may sometimes happen that several articles of the same kind but widely differing in value, are

to be conveyed to different individuals; and as few would lay claim to the inferior commodity, so the first applicant must have the fairest chance.

A few days ago a dispute of this kind was occasioned by a couple of turkeys. The first claimant marched away with a fine cock, which he was conscious was designed for him; and shortly after the application was made for the second bird by a good woman of my own neighbourhood, who, surveying it with unspeakable disdain for half a dozen seconds, at length recovered her tongue sufficiently to the demand emphatically whether the little insignificant 'cretor' was the only one in the boat, and taking leave of all patience when answered in the affirmative, vehemently protested that it had suffered a mutation of gender. The possibility of such a change I readily acquiesced in, and after silencing her clamorous disquietude with extreme difficulty, by undertaking to recover her departed favourite, or to satisfy her for the difference of its value, she condescended to take her leave, bitterly inveighing against the power of changing sexes.

In this trifling instance, however, what noise and trouble had been saved by a scrap of paper fastened to the leg ...

What noise and trouble, indeed!!!

Despite the apparently casual nature of business, the passage-boats were for many years the most popular means of getting oneself or one's parcels between Sydney and Parramatta. The Parramatta Road had its ups and downs with a vengeance for a long time, in both the literal and figurative sense.

Unfortunately there are few official details of the business readily available to us apart from Government orders. It has not been my good fortune to discover, as yet, one of the lists drawn up by the Naval Officer, giving full details of all passage-boats. This was required by a Government Order of 20 October 1810 - by which masters and owners had to furnish the names of their boats, their length and breadth, whether decked or not, with or without masts and sails, and how they were painted.

Just as I would like to know more about the boats, I should also like to know more about the owners and the boatmen themselves. In his diary entry of 26 July 1817, Governor Macquarie mentions one boatman whose name everyone seems to know -

... Mrs Macquarie and Lachlan set out by water in Billy Blue's boat for Parramatta ... he wrote.

But what of Mrs Ann Marsh of Sydney, and Mr Thomas Halfpenny of Parramatta; or of William Waring who was so rash as to refuse his boat to the constables to assist in taking some run-a-ways, as recorded in a despatch in 1802; or of John Bishop, proprietor for more than 26 years from 1795 onwards, who advertised in the Gazette in May, 1821?

The passage boats were replaced only with the advent of the steam paddle boats, beginning with the SURPRISE in June 1831. She was the fore-runner of the harbour ferry services ... but that is another story.

Now, I have mentioned the ROSE HILL PACKET, the FRANCIS and the SYDNEY, and the passage-boats, all of which might have been seen on the Parramatta River in the early days of the colony. There were also the 8 oared boat and the 16 oared cutter brought out for Governor Phillip's use, and the boats that replaced them over the years to take officials between Sydney and Parramatta. There were always some fishing boats, and some pleasure boats. For some years also, there would have been some aboriginal bark canoes, although due to small-pox, drink and the encroachment of their land, their days were numbered.

It is of interest to note, however, that James Backhouse, the Quaker visitor, described aborigines fishing from bark canoes in the Cook River some 50 years after the first settlement here.

What else was there on the river in those early years?

The whole official colonial fleet was never very impressive. Apart from the FRANCIS built in 1793, the CUMBERLAND, another small schooner built in 1801, and the BEE, a long-boat decked which replaced the SYDNEY, there were in 1803, only 2 long-boats, 3 pinnaces, 3 other small boats, and 1 large 'flat', barge lighter or lump - the one built in 1797, not the ROSE HILL PACKET, now no more. A third barge, lighter, lump, flat or punt was completed in 1803, and was to be used mainly to transport ship-timber from the Parramatta district to Sydney Cove, and to take provisions back. Thomas Moore, the Government's master shipwright, was responsible for selecting this ship-timber for the Admiralty.

There were government craft used to bring timber and lumber from Lane Cove - probably the 2 long-boats when they were not going up to Parramatta. John Cadman is listed in 1813 as the coxwain of one of these boats, and 4 years later as coxwain of the government boat, the ANTELOPE. In the ANTELOPE, John Cadman took stores up to Parramatta, and brought back sawn timber carted down to the river at Ryde from Pennant Hills.

Other government boats were used to bring back the grass cut in the Lane Cove area for use as fodder. There were 4 such boats in 1813.

Even to-day, in the reserve at the lower end of Mowbray Road, Lane Cove, you can see the hollow rock which - so tradition has it - formed the natural chimney for the rough hut used by one of these tough old reprobates. This same reserve, incidentally, is one of the few remaining areas of almost untouched virgin bush in the Sydney area.

As a passenger by one of the Parramatta River passage-boats, what would you have seen on the long trip from Sydney? As you left the Hospital Wharf, you might have passed a heavy lighter laden with provisions for Parramatta, being laboriously rowed into the tidal current. You might have seen the Governor's barge, smartly rowed by 8 tough convicts, or a government long-boat taking stores and maybe prisoners to the other settlement. Other government boats engaged in bringing firewood, grass for fodder and bark for roofing, all from the Lane Cover River, might be setting back empty for their next loads.

There could well be private colonial craft as well.. the fishing boats, the small pleasure craft....One class of boat came into existence very soon after the settlement of the Eastern Farms, later known as Kissing Point, and later still as Ryde; from about 1794 onwards a fleet of small boats known as the market boats, or the 'lumpsters', brought garden produce to the Market at Sydney. Note the word 'lumpster' - initially they would discharge in the Cove itself, but after 1810 they were obliged to use the new Market Wharf, which, naturally enough, lies at the foot of what is still known as Market Street. When the Sydney Gazette was first published in 1803, there were frequent references to these market boats whose visits, in the early years of the century, numbered about 4 a week, and whose cargoes of fruit, vegetables and poultry were occasionally priced so high, as to elicit unfavourable comment in the Gazette.

There were also private wood boats from the Lane Cove River. They would be piled up with firewood from sawpits situated for about 6 miles up the Lane Cover River. They would drop down with the tide into the harbour, and would then be propelled by long sweeps across to the Cove or to Market Wharf. There is a fascinating description of these boats in Alexander Harris' book "Settlers and Convicts" published in London in 1847. In this book, after describing the Lane Cove sawyers, and the shingle, lath and pale splitters, Harris writes of a passage up the Parramatta River in what he describes as -

...one of those snug little 2½ or 3 ton boats that the Lane Cover settlers manage to stow with top-heavy loads of wood, and yet bring safely down the stream to Sydney...We had the tide with us. A whole fleet of Lane Cove and Parramatta River boats were ahead of us; some of which had a large enough bough stuck up to catch the wind and help the oars; others we noticed where the boatmen for want of a sail, had set up their blankets.. one chap had his jacket with a stick passed through the arms as a sail. It must have done about as much good as his hat would, for hisboat was full 3 tons burden...

Alexander Harris also mentioned Joseph Fidden, of Fidden's Wharf, on Lane Cove, a man, he said, ..'who stood a bare 5' in height, but who was certainly 2/5ths of his own height across the shoulders..yet every tide didhe make a trip to Sydney pulling long, heavy oars, with 3 tons of wood in the boat, besides loading and unloading; 2 trips up and down, or to strike an average, about 46 miles every day....'

Other boats from Lane Cover and other parts of the harbour, were the ones used bythe limeburners, who made use of the many middens of shells built up over the centuries around the shores of the harbour by the aborigines, to provide the lime needed in ever-increasing quantities for the buildings of both Sydney and Parramatta.

One visitor as late as 1859 wrote -

...Of the harbour of Port Jackson it is difficult to speak within the bounds of calm description...for scenery, capacity and safety, the haven of Sydney is the finest in the world. It is a harbour ... Great mouldering rocks, crowned with tall, solitary trees, stretch along the shore..for miles out of town you mark the tortuous windings of the stream...One arm of it reaches up to Parramatta a distance of about 15 miles, and to my mind..the fairest river out of Eden. Its banks, from Sydney to Parramatta are crowned with orange trees..charming villas rise from every agreeable point along the banks, while here and there is a village of neat stone houses - with little garden and orange-grove to each, and sometimes a langing-place of rough whitened stones, runnint out into the stream - centred andconsecrated by a toy-like church, with tiny spire, bright with copper, pointing through the air... rising from the different parts of Port Jackson are verdant islets, singularly beautiful..edged with pendulous bushes and tropical water-plants..and smothered all over with a sward of matted bush flowers...

But what of the Parramatta River to-day? May I dare to ask how long since we journeyed that way, by boat?....

A few years ago four friend and I followed in the wake of the passage boats from North Sydney to the Duck River, beyond which we could not go, since it was dead low tide... It is still a fine harbour, ..some headlands and bays are kept as reserves.. Bedlam Point we could just make out the well-worn steps of a landing place 150 years old, just below the site of one of the semphare stations set up in the days when the governor resided at Parramatta, and needed to be kept in touch with what was going on in Sydney...We had lunch at Parramatta's old Redbank Wharf at the eastern end of Meadowbank Park...not as beautiful as of yore... There is still trade on the Parramatta River - the oil barges towed by Stannard's tugs up to the Duck River beyond Silverwater Bridge.

There is hope for the river, for the National Trust, among others, has taken an interest in its regeneration. They have a "strategic plan" for the control of pollution, for regeneration and landscaping of the river banks, allied with land conservation along the foreshores. I am sure we all wish them success.

Travelling to such places can help to bring dry old historical facts to life, as mere reading from books so rarely can. In case you wish to re-enact any historical old-fashioned gallantry, let me remind you of the following passage from the Sydney Gazette of 24 August 1806 ...

... thefollowing whimsical circumstance occurred last week at Parramatta -

A young woman, whose name is Salmon, stepping out of the passage-boat at the wharf, accepted a hand gallantly presented by a youth of the name of Haddock, whose attention to the lady rendering him careless of himself, he lost his equilibrium, and both the Haddock andthe Salmon, hand in hand, descended into their native element...

Ladies and gentlemen, let us not lose our equilibrium in this way, but, as we travel in all the luxury afforded by the wonders of modern science, in the buses and trains, let us occasionally givethought to our forebears, whose best means of getting from Sydney to Parrmatta, was by open passage-boat that might take a mere 14 hours for the trip.
