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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c

# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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

24 Duff Street,  
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

February 1985.

Dear Friend and Member,

The February Meeting will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening, February 15th, 1985, at 8.00 p.m.)  
\* Management Committee Meeting to follow.)

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

Business: General.

Syllabus Item: Alderman Ron Rathbone will be Guest Speaker. He will show slides of: "The Passion Play" at Oberammergau, and take us through Mediterranean Countries. I would suggest that you come reasonably early to get a seat, as this should be a most interesting and entertaining evening.

Supper Roster: Captain: Mrs. Thompson, together with Mesdames Troughton and Hunt.

Ladies please bring a plate.

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.  
Phone 50 9300

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

The big trouble with communication today is the short supply of those willing to be communicated with.  
Don Fraser.

Blessed are the peacemakers, the Troubleshooters and the mediators - for they shall never be unemployed.  
Olin Miller.

A cheerio to our friends who are not so well, and our best wishes for a speedy recovery, thinking of Mr. and Mrs. Faulkner, and Miss White.

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"	)	Book Nos.
No. 3. "Saywells Tramway - Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach"	)	1 - 8
No. 4. "Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway"	)	\$2.50 each.
No. 5. "Our Heritage in Stone"	)	
No. 6. "All Stations to Como"	)	<u>Plus Postage</u>
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" Vol. 1.		No. 9
Price \$4.00 <u>plus postage.</u>		\$4.00.
No.10. "Early Settlers of the St. George District, <u>Vol. 2.,</u>		
<u>will be available soon.</u>		

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

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SOCIAL

SATURDAY, MARCH 23RD, 1985.

A Coach Trip to "Parramatta & Thereabouts" has been arranged by Miss Row, and your support will be appreciated.

DATE: SATURDAY, MARCH 23RD, 1985.

TIME: 9.00 a.m.

MEETING PLACE: Railway Street, Rockdale.

COST: \$6.00 per person.

FURTHER DETAILS FROM DOROTHY, PHONE 50 9300.

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

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1985.

- TAPE 91 - 22nd January - Miles Franklin Authoress - S. Cran
- TAPE 92 - 29th January - The Towers of Sydney - B. Butters  
Sydney Town Hall
- TAPE 93 - 5th February - History of the Sargents in - D. Sinclair  
Australia
- TAPE 94 - 12th February - The Development of Municipal - T. Allison  
Administration of Public  
Health Services before 1896
- TAPE 95 - 19th February - Only a Tree is Left - S. Cran
- TAPE 96 - 26th February - Bushfires Sweep District - G. Coxhead  
The Parish of St. George 1874  
The Wood Carters of Early  
St. George
- TAPE 97 - 5th March - Governor Macquarie's Visit - C. Turner  
Charles Bampton and  
William Booth
- TAPE 98 - 12th March - A Brief History of West Botany - B. Butters  
Church & Obed West
- TAPE 99 - 19th March - The Colonial Medical Service - C. Turner  
Part I - Admin. Convict Hospital
- TAPE 100 - 26th March - The Parishes of Mintaville - T. Allison
- TAPE 101 - 2nd April - St. Patrick's & St. Paul's - S. Cran
- TAPE 102 - 9th April - The Colonial Medical Service - C. Turner  
Part II - Admin. Col. Hospital
- TAPE 103 - 16th April - Temple for the Books of Sydney - G. Coxhead
- TAPE 104 - 23rd April - West of the River Road - Part. I - M.D. Fleming
- TAPE 105 - 30th April - West of the River Road - Part II - M.D. Fleming
- TAPE 106 - 7th May - The Reminiscences of Obed West - C. Kennedy
- TAPE 107 - 14th May - The Colonial Medical Service - C. Turner  
Part III - Admin. Col. Hosp.
- TAPE 108 - 21st May - History & Conservation of the - M.D. Fleming  
Queen Victoria Markets Bldg.
- TAPE 109 - 28th May - Smithson's Wine Bar & The Good - C. Kennedy  
Life on Goat Island.

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

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1985.

- TAPE 110 - 4th June - Bridge Marks 50th Year & - D. Row  
Cockatoo Island
- TAPE 111 - 11th June - Surgeons of the First Fleet - M.D.Fleming
- TAPE 112 - 18th June - Bexley - 1895-1917 - D. Row  
(Repeat by request)
- TAPE 113 - 25th June - Persistence Rewarded.R.A.H.S. - C.Kennedy
- TAPE 114 - 2nd July - The Aboriginal Tribes of the - D. Row  
Sydney Region, Wood Carters  
of Early St. George and The  
Great Australian Verandah.

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The Society has been requested to read two historical booklets -

1. James Cook
2. Arthur Phillip.

The publishers, Movement Publications of Cabarita approached 2NBC-FM, who in turn invited the Society to tape the booklets. Both are written by Thea Stanley Hughes and will be presented over a couple of months.

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THE TANK STREAM -

The river they buried alive -

- Sally McInerney  
Good Weekend  
The Sydney Morning  
Herald -  
8th December 1984.

The bed of the old Tank Stream which is buried under Sydney is reputed to be a treasure trove of Australia's past. Steps are now being taken to ensure none of the relics are lost.

Once a bright little creek of fresh water, thronged with the usual ducks and fish and vital to a colony of convicts among the salty swamps of Sydney Cove, the Tank Stream still exists. However, it is now invisible except to Water Board workers (and, maybe once a year, to people who don't mind dark tunnels and cockroaches).

These days the Tank Stream runs under the City along a route mapped by the Water Board. The bed of the original stream, which entered Sydney Cove at its western side, becomes imprecise at the Quay, where history gets rather swampy.

The cove was once an odd-shaped estuary, which little boats could enter on the Tank Stream. It lost its outlines early and was gradually filled in to become a semi-circular quay. Consequently many things, even ships and the clear shape of stream-beds, were lost in the mud.

Much of the colony's early life took place near the stream.

The Sydney City Council, following a recommendation by Alderman Claire Vernon, has made it a condition of the Circular Quay Gateway site development approval that the developers should employ a consulting historian and a consulting archaeologist.

Mr Ross Wardley, Hooker City Developments' project manager for the Gateway joint venture by Hooker and National Mutual, said a few people would like to give the impression that a lot of people were interested.

A consulting historian, Kate Blackmore, and a consultant archaeologist, Ted Higginbotham, had been appointed, he said. Their reports would be ready before Christmas.

"I think a lot of things get lost in big cities", said Mr Bill Goodman, Inspecting Engineer (Operations) Sewerage, of the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, more often called the Water Board. "The Tank Stream disappeared from view long ago."

It runs through various kinds of conduits under the bast sealed floor of modern Sydney. The deep foundations of City buildings have sometimes diverted the stream. The sharp kinks of a natural watercourse were taken out of the stream long ago, but it has not strayed far from the original course.

Mr Goodman said that the stream is very important to the underground life of the City. It carries a hefty burden of stormwater in wild weather and taps several springs from fissures in the sandstone on which Sydney rests - notably near Margaret and Hunter Streets.

"It has no open sections any more. All you can see from the top are the manhole covers, and there are an awful lot of manhole covers in the City. There's a Tank Stream manhole in Martin Place near the Cenotaph."

The imprisoned stream now runs beneath the mighty bulk of the G.P.O., across Angel Place, down the lane that bisects Angel Arcade, under the back of Commercial Union House, down Hamilton Street and beneath Australia Square. It crosses Bond Street, goes under the N.Z. Insurance (Stock Exchange) building and then has a clear run under Pitt Street to the Quay.

For years its outlet pipe could be seen hidden by the Maritime Services Board's concrete skirting, built to counter the boisterous wash from ferry traffic.

The Hamilton Street sections are the oldest, being stone channel and arch constructions made by the Sydney City Council in 1860. The newest part is a concrete box channel built in 1975, which takes the Tank Stream in an aqueduct through the basement of the Stock Exchange Building.

This channel is reinforced and the Tank Stream cannot burst out. During the building of Goldfields House, though, the site suddenly became a deep swimming pool when the shoring around the excavation collapsed at high tide and the wall of the Tank Stream followed it.

Only the Water Board seems to have taken a consistent interest in the beleaguered stream, ever since piped water began to seem like a good idea.

This happened towards the middle of last century, when the City's slimy open drains began to make people sick. (They should not have thrown rubbish into the Tank Stream but there was nowhere else to throw it. They also insisted on washing in it and building pigsties on the banks).

There were the usual outcries, select committees,

accusations of bureaucratic bungling and corruption and by the end of 1856 the Bennelong Sewerage System had been completed. The swamp - now Hyde Park and its environs - which fed the Tank Stream was emptied and the latter became a humble drain. It had earlier been replaced as a fresh water supply by Busby's Bore, which brought water to town from the Centennial Park swamps.

Occasionally the Water Board conducts a guided tour of the Tank Stream system, beginning with a descent through the Angel Place manhole and ending at Crane Place - off Pitt Street near the Quay - beyond which the sections become too low and slippery for amateurs.

Under Goldfields House, it is said, lie the remains of two ships discovered deep in the sludge during excavations. Another reported discovery was a picket gate still hanging on its hinges. But that was more than 20 years ago and no authorities were interested. (Two more hulks are thought to be buried under Pitt Street.)

Twenty years ago workmen preparing the Australia Square site piled up their trophies in a corner of the site engineer's office.

An iron wedge, probably used by convicts for breaking stone, a cast-iron ball about the size of an orange, a bit of a crystal goblet and some expert-baffling triangular bottles were in the pile. After that the workmen restrained their picks and shovels, or so it was reported in The Sydney Morning Herald of October 1964:

"now they use the gentle swing of archaeologists whenever they uncover anything that looks historical."

Things that look historical have become the province of the Heritage Council, the National Trust, consultant archaeologists and people in university departments, all of whom are filled with keen regret at the thought of those skilled but untrained workmen uncovering historical relics and, no doubt, accidentally covering them up again.

The beautiful vanished Tank Stream encourages myths which make it sound like an unquiet ghost. People claim to have heard it after heavy rain, sloshing in cellars of old stone buildings, at the Quay. (The Paragon and the Ship Inn, where old seadogs used to moor, often figure in these stories). It is said to emerge sometimes in the basements of new skyscrapers, as if bent on revenge. But it cannot rise from its watertight pipes.



There are accounts - some true - of glimpses when the stream was exposed on excavation sites but the Tank Stream Fountain below the American Express building is fed, not by the stream, but by ordinary water.

And, when told of Ruth Park's good fortune in seeing it "burst like a fountain, clear and sunshot, from under a shifted paving stone near Rowe Street," Mr Goodman of the Water Board, said that it could not have been so - since the Tank Stream runs on the wrong side of Pitt Street for such a sighting.

He said it with some regret.

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THE NEW SOUTH WALES FIRE BRIGADES -

The following is a copy of a leaflet distributed to the Society on 16th November 1984, when Paul Luxton, Station Officer, of the Alexandria lecturing Section, gave a very informal, but very informative talk on the Centenary of the N.S.W. Fire Brigades.

For your information - Firemen are now known as Firefighters.

In Retrospect.

The New South Wales Fire Brigades as a State-wide united firefighting service came into existence in 1910 under the control of a sole authority, The Board of Fire Commissioners.

Before this, from 1884 to 1909, the organised protection of Sydney and suburbs was the responsibility of the Metropolitan Fire Brigades Board. In 1909 there were 21 permanently manned Fire Stations and 31 other Stations staffed by volunteers. In all there were 478 firemen.

Authorities in country towns arranged their own fire services, generally under the auspices of the Local Council.

In Sydney at that time the mobile pumping appliances (fire engines) were very largely taken to the scenes of fires by horses and were either operated manually or by steam. The forerunner of today's motor fire engine was first introduced in Sydney in 1905, but by 1909 there were still only 3 of these appliances in service, 2 of which were located at the Brigade's Castlereagh Street Headquarters.

Prior to 1884 there was no statutory body responsible for firefighting in Sydney and elsewhere.

There existed the Insurance Companies' Brigade, known as the Sydney Fire Establishment, set up in 1851 by Thomas Bown who was to be later called "The Father of Sydney Firemen".

This Brigade became the nucleus of the 1884 Metropolitan Fire Brigade and its Station was located in Bathurst Street, behind approximately where now stands the Regent Theatre.

Fire protection of buildings was somewhat haphazard. There were cases in the early part of the last century where an Insurance Company's Brigade would respond to a call, and on observing the "fire mark" (a plaque fixed to the building) which indicated that the building was not insured by the Brigade's company, would pack up and go home.

The amalgamation of Insurance Company Brigades in 1851 largely stopped this practice.

Elsewhere in Sydney and in a number of suburbs there were also Volunteer Fire Brigades.

Payment for fighting a fire was made to the first volunteer brigade "to put water onto the fire".

This system at times led to brawls between competing brigades and on occasions brigades would even cut the hoses of rivals.

These tactics had ceased by the 1860's when there were operating several quite efficient volunteer brigades in the City, who were paid for their attendance.

In 1854 Volunteer Company Number 1 was formed under the leadership of Andrew Tarning, and in 1857 Volunteer Company Number 2 was established under William Camb.

Tarning's first Station was located in Pitt Street near to where is now the entrance to the Strand Arcade; the Station later moved to Pitt Street, Haymarket, and this building still stands.

#### Today.

The N.S.W. Fire Service is funded by the various insurance Companies (75%) and the State and Local Governments (12½%) each.

The cost of maintaining the Service amounts to \$40 million annually (1977).

This figure does not include the cost of providing new equipment, motors and fire stations, which is approximately \$3 million a year.

The Board also directs the activities of the Service's workshops (motor, electrical, clothing, building maintenance and stores).

The welfare of the community is also enhanced by specialised departments established for fire prevention and instruction.

The modern well-equipped N.S.W. Fire Brigades protect the largest area in size in the free-world controlled by a single authority.

Equipment is continually being modernised and new fire stations erected. In 1977 there were over 300 fire stations, more than 400 mobile appliances, and a firefighting force exceeding 4,500.

In 1976 the Brigades answered 44,000 fire calls. Less than one quarter of a percent of these calls resulted in major fire losses.

Your Safety.

Fears for the City's fire security when its buildings "reach 15 storeys high" have not eventuated.

Owing far more to good management than to good luck, the tall buildings of today are designed to maximise fire prevention and extinguishment. The security of the buildings' occupants is a major consideration under numerous strict regulations controlling materials of construction and interior design.

Under various statutes and ordinances high-rise buildings must contain a proven standard of internal structural fire compartmentation and have adequate fire protective installations (sprinklers, hydrants) with control also over the spread of smoke.

The orderly evacuation of occupants using pressurised stairways (where self-closing fire doors and controlled air pressure within the escape route prevent the entry of smoke) is another prerequisite for the construction of sky-scrapers.

In these concepts and their implementation the authorities within Sydney and the State have led the world.

However, no matter what stringent precautions are taken emergencies can always arise. The cause of most fires is human negligence and ignorance. It is pertinent to point out that more injuries from fires happen in the home than elsewhere.

Should you require a copy of the Board's pamphlet "Fire Prevention" write to the Secretary, Board of Fire Commissioners, Box A249 P.O. Sydney South 2000.

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GREGORY'S DIRECTORIES STARTED WITH A COUNTRY  
BOY WHO GOT LOST .....

- Sally McInerney  
Sydney Morning Herald  
25th August 1984.

Cecil Albert Gregory, was so confused by Sydney's bullock-track streets when he moved from Bathurst to work on the Daily Telegraph in the 1920s, that he started making maps of them in his spare time.

When his first street directories found their way onto bookstalls at Central Station it was said that Gregory did everything to prevent the traveller getting lost except provide a team of black trackers.

Fifty years later, Gregory's directories are famous. The 49th edition of the Sydney street directory will be launched on Monday 27th August 1984.

Cecil Gregory died 10 years ago, 1974, at the age of 80, but the Gregory map company keeps his name alive, publishing street guides to Wollongong, Canberra, Brisbane and Newcastle, State road maps, touring guides and car maintenance handbooks in addition to the Sydney directory.

In the tradition of Cecil Gregory, who drove over every road in the State before he mapped it, cartographer Ian Tollis, goes on the road for several months each year marking changes for the next editions.

Maps in hand, he drives around the streets of the growing suburbs and visits suburban councils in each of the five cities, asking the same questions: Have you got any new streets? Any new parks? Any new road closures, one-way streets or roundabouts?

He sends letters to the Department of Main Roads, the Housing Commission and Landcom, asking questions about changes. Some organisations respond more meticulously than others.

"The D.M.R. is always doing new work, and when they do new work, we have to follow", he said.

A short strip of bitumen between Wilcannia and Hay, on the Cobb Highway, creeps a little further in each new edition of the State sheet map. A close watch is kept on the progress of the Wyong bypass.

As for the city suburbs, Ian Tollis knows which ones are fast-moving, which ones are sleepy, and which ones have no room to move.



The company's draughting offices have just been moved to the Ryde industrial estate, among grassy paddocks where old bath tubs serve as water-troughs for cows. The unsealed road leading to the offices suddenly becomes a cul-de-sac, plunging down-hill among gum trees without warning - the sort of thing that bothered Cecil Gregory.

Cardboard sheets are fixed against windows to keep the western sun from disturbing the balance of light in the draughting room.

Bottles of ink, braced by ingenious homemade platforms to prevent spills, stand on the desks. A camera the size of a horse is used to reduce the finished maps to page size.

"Gregory's maps were all hand-lettered at first," Ian Tollis said. "We switched over to type about 15 years ago, because it was the thing to do, but this year we've started hand-lettering again. It's more versatile and permanent. We had trouble with bits of type falling off the plastic sheets. There are so many letters on each map, the odd one could drop off without being noticed. Holtermann Street might become Holterman, say, and no-one would be any the wiser."

The street plans are drawn on plastic sheets, with parallel rules and French curves taking care of straights and bends. Sue Storey and Peter Gardyne ink letters on the sheets with expert care.

Harry Bouletos, an apprenticed printer's cartographic draughtsman, was practising his lettering on a map of the Melbourne suburb, Werribee, where some skill was required to bend the words Cyprus and Botanic along short, curved streets and to compress the word Acacia Street into the space taken up by a cul-de-sac.

Councils which give long names to short streets are the bane of map-makers. Banjo Paterson Crescent, Padstow, is notorious among local map-makers - at least, those who work on a small scale.

"This is the biggest stinker of a street we've got," Ian Tollis said. "It's a dead end about three houses long. Ridiculous. In Wollongong we've had to number a new subdivision instead of printing the street names on it. In Canberra, now, they're much more enlightened; they try to give short streets, short names. The average street is 22 metres wide. On our scale, that's all right for lettering. But some of these new developments have very narrow streets. They call them access ways."

The draughtsmen insert imaginary details like lanes and tiny cul-de-sacs to trick map pirates. If someone copies their

maps, they can say, "Aha! That lane doesn't exist."

Last year Sydenham had a new street, the first for many years; it provides access to a new industrial estate. Meanwhile, Canberra has sprouted two new suburbs called Oxley and Gilmore.

Some councils go in for mass naming sessions, perhaps influenced by the hobbies of councillors. New streets around the Menai public school are named after cricketers, runners, swimmers and tennis players.

Bonnet Bay sports a bunch of American presidents, and the streets of Raby, near Campbelltown, celebrate aircraft: Starfighter, Thunderbolt, Mustang, Liberator, Skyhawk, Sopwith.

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- Sydney Morning Herald  
27th August 1984.

To-day's launch of the new 49th edition of the Gregory's Sydney Street Directory, also marks the 50th anniversary of the directory. Many of you would probably still be trapped in the wilds of some distant suburb were it not for the faithful directory in the glovebox, but some old editions might be valuable in other ways. Ced Gregory's first edition (dating from November 1934) and second edition (1935) are rare birds, and even Gregory's itself cannot find a copy of the 12th edition (April 1943).

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- Sydney Morning Herald  
6th September 1984.

Every Herald reader seems to possess an old street directory. The oldest so far is "Street Plan of Sydney - A Stranger's Guide to Sydney" - dated 1838.

Another advertises the Willoughby Hotel as a "mountain retreat five miles from Sydney" - and a third says of Sans Souci: "If time can be spared, 2 or 3 days here, for it is a most delightful spot and is really too far from Sydney to enable anyone to visit it, take a turn up the river and be back in Sydney within a day.".....