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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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563A Princes Highway,
BLAKEHURST 2221

November 1986

Dear Friend and Members,

The November meeting will be held as follows:

Date: Friday, 21st November, 1986 at 8.00 p.m.

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

Business: General

Syllabus Item: Vaughan Evans, a very good friend of the Society will be Guest Speaker. He has chosen to speak on - "A Migrant Remembers: My trip to Australia as a Migrant in the New Australia, January 1955"

Supper Roster: Captain: Miss Row, together with Mrs Lee and Mrs Abigail

LADIES PLEASE BRING A PLATE. THANK YOU LADIES

Mr. A. Ellis,
President & Research
Officer

Mrs B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer

Mrs K. Hamey,
Secretary

Telephone: 587 1159

Telephone: 587 9164

Telephone: 546 5640

Mrs E. Wright,
Treasurer

Mrs K. Hamey,
Social Secretary

Mrs E. Eardley,
Bulletin Editor

Telephone: 599 4884

Telephone: 546 4650

Telephone: 59 8078

Miss D. Row, Assistant Treasurer

According to Dr. Melford Funk the following are the most expressive words in the English language:

The most bitter - Alone
The most tragic - Death
The most beautiful - Love
The most peaceful - Tranquility

The most reverend - Mother The warmest - Friendship
The saddest - Forgotten The coldest - No
The most cruel - Revenge

The three sweetest words in the English language are: Cheque enclosed herewith
Friendship Book 1971

A cheerio to our freinds who are not so well. Our best wishes to all for a speedy recovery. On a sad note, Mr. Steinfurth and Mr. Welch are no longer with us. Our deepest sympathy to their loved ones.

SPECIAL NOTICE ALL BOOKS NOW AVAILABLE

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, 9 and 10 have been compiled by Mrs Bronwyn Perkins.

No. 1	"The Wolli Creek Valley")	
No. 2	"Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway")	Book Nos.1-8
No. 3	"Saywells Tramway - Rockdale to Lady Robinsons Beach")	\$2.50 each
No. 4	"Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway")	plus postage
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" Volume 1)	Books Nos.9-10
	(Price \$4.00 plus postage))	\$4.00 each plus
No.10	"Early Settlers of the St. George District" Volume 2)	postage

ALL BOOKS ARE AVAILABLE AT OUR MEETING, ALSO MEMBERS BADGES

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

Miss B. Otton	-	Telephone 59 4259 (after 8.00 p.m.)
Mrs E. Eardley	-	Telephone 59 8078
Mr. A. Ellis	-	Telephone 587 1159
Mrs K. Hamey	-	Telephone 546 3355

NEW MEMBERS AND VISITORS ARE WELCOME

2NBC-FM - ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY - 1986**Tuesday evenings - 6.30p.m. - 6.45 p.m.**

- TAPE 186 - 18th November - James Cook - Part 2 - Charles Turner
(by request)
- TAPE 187 - 25th November - James Cook - Part 3 - Charles Turner
(by request)
- TAPE 188 - 2nd December - Arthur Phillip - Part 1 - M.D.Fleming
(by request)
- TAPE 189 - 9th December - Arthur Phillip - Part 2 - M.D.Fleming
(by request)
- TAPE 190 - 16th December - Arthur Phillip - Part 3 - M.D.Fleming
(by request)

These historical segments finish for 1986 on 16th December.
The Society sincerely thanks 2NBC-FM for allowing us to take
part as they do, and also thank all readers, without whom the
programme would not go to air.

Hopefully, we shall resume transmission February 1987.

PERSISTENCE REWARDED - PART II -

- K.A.Johnson (Councillor)
Newsletter of the
Royal Australian Historical Society
No.2 - New Series -
April 1981.

DAVID SCOTT MITCHELL, M.A. (1836 - 1907)

The first Patron, David Scott Mitchell, son of Dr. James Mitchell was born on 19 March 1836, in what was part of the Sydney Infirmary (now Parliament House) Macquarie Street, Sydney, very close to where his great library of Australiana is now housed.

Mitchell was one of the first graduates at the Sydney University. He obtained a B.A. Degree in 1856 and M.A. in 1859, the latter in the first batch of higher degrees, was conferred in the University's Great Hall the day it was opened, when young W.H.H.Yarrington recited his prize-winning Ode to Captain Cook. This event was no doubt recounted in latter years by Mitchell and Yarrington.

Although admitted as a barrister at law, Mitchell never practised, he managed properties he inherited on the Hunter River as a younger man. He collected books and pamphlets on Australia for at least twenty years. His father could have been responsible for his interest in books. Dr Mitchell was on the Committee of the Australian Subscription Library from 1832 to 1852, likewise the Australian Library and Literary Institution in 1853. In 1854-55 he was Vice President and President from 1856 until his death in 1869. The Institution became known as the Public Library of New South Wales from 1870 until 1975.

D.S.Mitchell did not marry: probably his closest personal friend was his cousin Rose Scott, the social reformer and champion of women's rights. He died on 24 July, 1907, was the Mitchell wing of the Public Library of New South Wales was nearing completion, but it was not ready to receive his magnificent benefaction for three years. Only six months prior to his death Mitchell had acquired the substantial Australiana collection of Alfred Lee. Mitchell was imbued by the national significance of the enormous collection of Australiana that had been amassed: over 70,000 volumes as well as a large collection of manuscripts, maps and pictures. Possibly this is why he wished to be Patron of the *Australian* Historical Society at the time of the Federation of the Australian States but the visits to his home in Darlinghurst Road by Yarrington, Lee and Edward Stack were probably his main contacts with the Society.

ANDREW HOUISON, B.A., M.B., Ch.M., (1850 - 1912)

The Foundation President, Dr Andrew Houison, born at Macquarie Street, Parramatta on 1 January, 1850, was the youngest son of James Houison, a prominent builder of Parramatta, responsible for the enlarged St. John's Church, the erection of All Saints Church, Parramatta Gaol and the other fine stone buildings in Parramatta.

Dr Houison graduated B.A. from Sydney University in December 1868 (i.e. before his 19th birthday) and M.B., Ch.M from the University of Edinburgh in 1873. He returned to practise in Sydney from 1874. For the 35 years from 1877 until 1912 that he was Secretary of the New South Wales Medical Board, he did not miss a single meeting (no doubt he convened meetings at times convenient to the secretary!) He was a prominent Church of England layman. Dr Houison died at his home, 47 Phillip Street, Sydney, on 27 August 1912. He had been a Councillor of the Australian Historical Society since its inauguration and served as President in 1901 and 1908. Mr J.K.S.Houison, a later President and Honorary Secretary and member of the Society from 1921 to 1968 was a great-nephew.

The three Vice Presidents in 1901 had each arrived in Sydney as young men, many years previously. Selfe and Yarrington from England in 1855 and 1841 respectively and Lee, a younger man, from New Zealand in 1874, after seven years' residence there.

NORMAN SELFE, M.I.C.E. (1839-1911).

Norman Selfe, the son of Henry and Elizabeth Selfe, was born 9 December, 1839, at Kingston-on-Thames, England. In January 1855, the family accompanied a consignment of cargo with which Henry Selfe set up business in Sydney. Norman, his elder son, had been educated for the engineering profession, he was employed by the firm of Peter Nicol Russell. Among his numerous achievements as a Civil Engineer were the plant at the historic Shale mine at Hartley Vale; design and construction work with the Australian Gaslight Company and the Morts Dock and Engineering Company. He introduced the ice making machine into New South Wales, the first elevators to be used in Sydney and a new system of wool pressing. Many of the deep sea wharves in the Port of Sydney were planned by Selfe. In 1903 he designed a bridge that it was proposed should be built from Sydney to the North Shore. He prepared plans for the remodelling of Sydney and advocated the construction of a circular railway in the City. Norman Selfe was responsible for the establishment of the first classes in technical education at the School of Arts, Sydney. He became first Chairman of the Board of Technical Education, but resigned in April, 1888 after a rebuke by the Minister of Public Instruction. The Secretary of the Board from 1883 to 1890 was Edward Dowling, who was also connected with the foundation of the Society.

Selfe was active in the Royal Society of New South Wales, was President

of this Society in 1902 and was associated with it from its foundation until his death on 15 October 1911, at Normanhurst. The suburb previously known as Hornsby, of which he owned 10 acres, was renamed in his honour.

His younger daughter, Miss Norma Selfe, who has entered her 89th year of age, still resides in the family residence erected there in 1893. The elder daughter, Miss Rhoda Jane Selfe, at the age of eighteen was one of the first three women members of the Australian Historical Society in 1901.

WILLIAM HENRY HAZELL YARRINGTON, M.S., LL.B., (1839-1922).

The Reverend William Henry Hazell Yarrington, the son of Frederic Kirby Yarrington and his wife Elizabeth Hazell, was born at Norwich England on 4 July 1839 (he was the same age as Selfe). He arrived in Sydney in 1841 with his parents who set up business as a bookbinder and bonnet maker respectively. At the opening of the Great Hall at the University of Sydney on 18 July 1859, after degrees were conferred, Yarrington, then twenty, as winner of the W.C.Wentworth prize for Poetry recited his poem "Cook Meditating on Australia's Future". This early interest in Australian history remained with him throughout his life. He was ordained a deacon of the Church of England by Bishop Mesac Thomas of Goulburn in 1870 and a priest in 1872. Yarrington served as a minister at Balranald, Yass, West Maitland and Burwood during the ensuing forty years and as a relieving clergyman, mainly in the Diocese of Sydney, during his retirement. W.H.H. Yarrington graduated from Sydney University B.A. in 1876, M.A. in 1879, and LL.B. in 1887.

He had edited an anthology of miscellaneous prose and verse published in Sydney in 1868. He published other poetry, numerous sermons and theological pamphlets together with papers of an historical nature for the Society's journal. Yarrington was President of the Society in 1903 and 1910 and associated with it from its foundation until his death at Mosman on 11 April, 1922. The learned clergyman was buried at the Gore Hill Cemetery as were Selfe, Stack and Bladen a decade earlier.

He was responsible for the Society's motto: VETERIS NON INSCITUS AEVI: which translated is an appropriate motto: "Not forgetful of the times that are old".

The Rev. Clive Yarrington, Rector of St. Clement's Church, Mosman, from 1907 to 1937 was his son, a grandson was also a clergyman. It is significant that the Rev. Yarrington Snr, was the Rector of St. Clement's, Yass at the time Alfred Lee and Minnie Dodds were married there in 1879. A friendship of more than forty years had commenced, a fortunate occurrence for the future Australian Historical Society. It is fitting that both Yarrington and Lee became Vice Presidents of the Society in Sydney in 1901, despite the difference of nineteen

years in their ages. It seems likely that Yarrington's interest in history influenced the young couple.

ALFRED LEE (1858 - 1923) and MINNIE LEE (nee Dodds) (1860 - 1938).

In my view both Mr & Mrs Lee deserve to be treated as Founders of the Society. The failure of the Society to recognise Minnie Lee, its first Lady member, as a Founder was surely a remarkable omission. The time has come to remedy it. Mrs Lee had been active during the inception period as well as the tough early years following the inauguration of the Society; she was undoubtedly a Founder.

Alfred Lee was born near Dublin, Ireland on 8 June, 1858, the eldest surviving son of Frederick Norman Lee, who took up land in New Zealand in 1867. Alfred attended Grammar School in Christchurch and Auckland. Aged 16 years he came to Sydney alone with pounds 10.0.0 to make his mark in the business world; it happened remarkably quickly. He was employed by Enoch Taylor and Co. Boot and Shoe Importers, established in Australia since 1860. Within a decade of his engagement Lee was Manager for Australia and in 1888 he became senior partner of the company.

Alfred Lee and Minnie Dodds as previously mentioned, were married in Yass in 1879 by the Rev. William Yarrington. Minnie Dodds was born on 7 April 1860, at Cros Nest Cottage. Her parents, Henry and Harriet Ann Dodds, had leased the historic North Shore dwelling the previous year from the merchant, Alexander Berry. Mrs Lee was known to be a great reader. She became a member of the Women Writers' Association and wrote a History of Australia for Schoolchildren. It was not published but has been used by her descendants. According to Lees' daughter, Mrs Norah St. George Butler, in an account of her parents' achievements, written in 1958, her father's friend, Frank Bladen, the Editor of *Historical Records of New South Wales*, who became what is now known as the State Librarian, exercised some influence over her father's book collecting. The Lees amassed at their home, Glen Roona, Penkivil Street, Bondi, over a period of almost twenty years, a fine collection of Australiana. The collection attracted the attention of David Scott Mitchell, especially when Lee's overseas agents beat him to some prize. A typical example was the acquisition by Lee in London in 1888 of the handwritten journal of Sir Joseph Banks that had been in the possession of J. Henniker-Heaton, the compiler of the *Australian Dictionary of Dates* (published in 1879). Mitchell made known his great interest in the prize! The circumstances surrounding the purchase by Mitchell of the entire Lee collection at the end of 1906 are of interest.

I attach considerable significance to the fact that these two Founders of the Australian Historical Society amassed independently in Sydney what became the finest collection of Australiana in the world.

Alfred Lee was a close friend of David Scott Mitchell and visited him frequently at his home in Darlinghurst Road. Mrs Lee and Mitchell's cousin, Rose Scott, were friends. It seems likely that they had opportunities to discuss also the formation of the Society outside of the provisional committee meetings arranged for that purpose at their respective homes.

Mitchell urged Lee to consider giving his library to the nation at the same time as Mitchell himself, presumably to be known as the Mitchell/Lee Collection. Lee, married with five children, felt he could not do this and agreed to have his library of over 10,000 volumes incorporated into the David Scott Mitchell Collection. Mitchell had no family responsibilities, he was a 70 year old bachelor and a recluse with private means. He gladly paid Lee the cost price of his collection plus 2 & 1/2% - the Lee family's understanding of how an agreement was reached on the price of pounds 5,750.0.0.

Included at Mitchell's request were two volumes which I will refer to as the Commonwealth books. One was a scrap book containing invitations to Mr & Mrs Lee to attend the opening of the first Commonwealth Parliament in Melbourne in 1901 and the other a volume published by the Commonwealth containing the names of the invited guests. Mitchell admitted to Lee that he was hurt that he had not himself been invited to the opening. It was an unfortunate oversight that Mitchell, the great public benefactor and indeed the Patron of the Australian Historical Society, had been overlooked.

Mitchell did not make his collection available to students during his lifetime. Mr & Mrs Lee did, they missed the visitors who undertook research in their library. The Lees both remained members of the Society until their deaths at Glen Roona, Bondi, on 2 August, 1923 and 23 September, 1938, respectively.

CHRISTINA STEAD -- Authoress --

The St. George Historical Society has been most fortunate in having already published within the Bulletins - articles concerning Christina Stead. We now add two more.

It's Enough to Hear her Speak -

- Anna-Mario Dell'oso
Sydney Morning Herald
T.V. Guide - 2.5.1983

In the country of Christina Stead's birth, her wizardly novels were for a long time absent from book shops.

When Stead's stories lived a pale academic life in Australian university literature classes, lecturers struck with the black passion of Stead's novel - "The Man Who Loved Children" - would refer students to an obscure A.B.C. radio interview where the author talked, among other things, of poisoning her stepmother.

The interview was recorded in Melbourne in 1979. Christina Stead talked at length to interviewer Rodney Wetherell. Stead says she did not actually poison her step-mother, though Louie - the plump, sensitive eldest child in "The Man Who Loved Children" - did.

It is a crucial moment in a long, patient interview with the testy genius. When Wetherell asks, "Does it (the novel) have any connection with the life you lived at Watson's Bay?"

Stead suddenly switches into the third person. There is an insight into the writer's complex link between the stuff of stories and the pain of life. "Of course it's exactly word for word. Well, of course, she didn't try to poison her step-mother, but she thought about it, because of the fearful unhappiness."

Christina Stead died in March, 1983, at the age of 80 years.

The 1979 interview with Rodney Wetherell, in which the author looks back over a large part of her life and writing, was re-broadcast on 2nd May 1983.

Wetherell fared better than most of the interviewers, who tried to get close to Christina Stead. Though Stead is at times prickly and ascerbic, with a stubborn refusal to categorise herself in any way, her stories and eloquence are seductive, her passion for the cities of the world, life and love is exhilarating.

Christina Stead emerges as a fierce individual. She was a fluent "inspired" writer, who wrote at great speed with little revision: "I never struggle. I never have any of this furrowed brow stuff that they always depict writers as having." She recalls she wrote "House of all Nations" in 6 weeks in Spain.

There are the well-repeated Stead stories, her roving life in London, Paris and New York with her business-writer husband, William Blake. There are vivid memories of Spain at the time of the Civil War.

There are the tales of her husband submitting her first manuscript, "Seven Poor Men of Sydney", to Sylvia Beach in Paris and the writing of "The Salzburg Tales" in a kitchen flat.

The greatest pleasure of Wetherell's 1979 interview with Stead, is sheerly to hear the author talk - in the rhythmic, rich and springly dialogue for which her characters are famous: "... my father used to talk me to sleep every night... And the things I heard as I went to sleep was all this about the geography underneath my bed. The sea was in a sense, my country. While I was lying there, and he was talking to me about Australia, and the inland and the blacks, I had all these things underneath me, and things would be talking to me, probably because I was being talked to..."

Wetherell's interview is a treasure-trove of Steadian words and a revealing memory of Australia's finest writer.

With love, from Christina Stead & help
from her brother, Gilbert..

- Susan Wyndham
Sydney Morning Herald
Good Weekend
2nd February 1985

What has happened to the huge library of Christina Stead since her death? Susan Wyndham follows a trail criss-crossed by brotherly love.

Christina Stead was horrified when she found out, some years ago, what often happened to books when their owner died. She decided that the books on her shelves would not end up on the rubbish tip.

Her step-brother Gilbert, tells the story: - "The big thing that really moved Chris, just a few years before decimalisation, was an ad. in the "Herald", for 40,000 books at sixpence a copy. She was shocked at it - she was very sensitive.

"I was always looking out for interesting books on one hand, and for family books on the other (Chris wasn't the only one in the family who wrote. I once saw a book by her husband, Bill Blake, mixed up in the works of William Blake the poet). So I rang and asked if the books were catalogued or if there was any way of looking at them alphabetically, by title or by author. The answer was no, but that I could come and look at them in cartons. I didn't have time to do that and I asked what would happen if they weren't sold. They were going to St. Peters, to the tip."

"That really brought Chris out of herself. She always said to me and her correspondents, that books, in whatever state, should get into the hands of the people who want them."

So, almost 2 years after his sister's death, Gilbert Stead made it his business to pass some of the books in her private library to those people.

For 3 months her has been sorting and cataloguing and packing and posting. The long room at the back of his stolid, liver brick house at Hurstville, which he built on for Christina in the last years of her life, has been crowded with neat stacks of books and piles of boxes.

A 3 line advertisement in the "Herald's" books pages brought an avalanche of orders. Even now they are trickling in. Some of the best books could have been sold a dozen times or more. Ironical really, when you remember that until quite recently Stead was hardly recognised in her own country and was even denied the Encyclopaedia Britannica Australian Award, because of her long absence.

"I got killed in the rush. I'm still coming up for air," said Mr Stead, a methodical man in his late 60s who still works, since his retirement, as superannuation consultant to a large legal firm.

His career could not have been more different from that of his literary sister. While Christina was in New York, Paris and London, writing her now famous novels -

- . House of All Nations
- . The Man Who Loved Children
- . Seven Poor Men of Sydney
- . For Love Alone ---

Gilbert was an apprentice fitter and turner, then a number of different things in the oil industry, and finally finance officer for the Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers.. he's always had a head for figures.

He, among the 7 Stead children, was the only born after the family moved from their grand house at Bexley - Lydham Hall - to Watson's Bay. He was the baby of the family and looked up to Christina, the child of his father's first marriage, as a second mother. Later he did her tax returns and became unofficial godfather to her book collection.

David Stead, a scientist, adventurer and writer - passed on to all his children, a love of books. That is obvious as Gilbert Stead walks among the emptying shelves of his sister's library, pulling out volumes, fingering their paper, admiring a fine, leather-bound author's copy of her novel - "Dark Places of the Heart". But books, he says, are a bit like a frying pan, if you're learning to cook - just something to use.

Gilbert Stead remembers his sister's return from England in 1974 - with 28 mail bags chock-a-block with books, manuscripts and papers - (even knowing Chris he was astonished).

He took them home to Hurstville, where most of them remained even when Christina left periodically to be writer-in-residence at universities in Newcastle, Melbourne, Adelaide and Canberra.

Christina Stead died in March, 1983 - at the age of 80. As her will stipulated, her manuscripts went to the National Library in Canberra. Three filing cabinets full of unpublished work went to her literary trustee.

Gilbert Stead was left with uncounted rows of books. The U Committee of the University of NSW, which organises university's biennial book fair, took a carload of old, and some valuable books for its book fair in 1986. (The last one raised \$98,000 for the university).

Two hundred of the remaining books went into a catalogue for public sale. To read the list is to see at least a little way into Christina Stead's mind. There are classics:- Darwin and Shakespeare and Forster and Fielding. There are scientific, historic and anthropological works. There is poetry, criticism and some surprises - "Will You Marry Me" - "Proposal Letters of Seven Centuries".

There are presents from her distinguished friends:- a copy of H.C.Coombs' "Other People's Money" is inscribed - "For Christina-with love from Cole".. Don Dunstan's cookbook says - "To Chris, Good fun! Don".. "Dingo King" written by Ivan Smith and illustrated by Clifton Pugh, has on its front page a line drawing of an emu, a crocodile and a distant mountain range, signed by the artist.

Then there are the family books. David Stead's "The Edible Fishes of NSW" is listed with "Wild Flowers of Australia" by his third wife, Thistle Y Harris. Bill Blake, who started as a banker, ended as a writer and died in 1968, has a long list of books from novels to "An Intelligent American's Guide to the Peace (1945)".

There are 8 of Christina Stead's own works, one with a hand-written list of her addresses in England, Wales and Australia, two with inscriptions to her husband.

One long and witty message begins: "Once more the ghosts of other rages annoy me palely in these pages.." For serious collectors, \$40 and \$50 were small prices to pay for these, and they knew it. Those books were sold the moment Gilbert Stead emptied his letterbox of order forms.

The biggest buyer, he is pleased to report, was the Fisher Library at Sydney University. The others, he said, not giving much away, included "smaller libraries, individual librarians, a journalist, a drama person, someone in England, people all over Australia, people who knew her library."

It was good, he added warmly, that few of the books went to dealers.

The bigger buyers were allowed to rummage through unlisted piles of paperbacks, which showed Christina Stead's passion for horror stories (she'd tell some beaut ones), and the causes she took up with her friends ("she once gave her name to a matter of changing the Constitution and to a committee for a treaty with the Aborigines, although she wasn't a political person"). Many of the books she had bought were intended to be sent to friends instead of sending Christmas cards.

"She had an enormous range of friends around the world and she was a prolific correspondent," Gilbert Stead recalls. "She'd receive on one day anything from 1 to 25 letters that were nothing to do with business."

He looks across the room which was once Christina's. Now it houses a piano, a filing cabinet and some old chairs and tables. The walls are unpainted and silver insulation batts line the ceiling. Mr Stead chuckles at the way he and his family crowded in there for Christmas lunch. It is an un-poetic room, the result perhaps of its last tenant's habit of moving home often.

"She'd sit at a little desk there, where the light was good, and her day would start early. By noon she would have replied to every letter. I used to do all her mailing".

The proceeds from the book sale will go to Wirrimbirra Sanctuary at Bargo, which was set up under the National Trust as a memorial to David Stead and his love of wildlife. Christina too, had a great interest in conservation and the future of the world.

Gilbert Stead has left nothing to chance. "I'm a backroom boy, the engineer behind the scenes," he says, his arms crossed, satisfied with his achievement. "I'm admirably suited to this kind of thing."

Syllabus Item: Vaughan Evans, a very good friend of the Society will be Guest Speaker. He has chosen to speak on "Migrant Reminders: My trip to Australia as a Migrant in the New Australia, January

The earlier articles on Christina Stead appear in the November 1977 Bulletin of the St. George Historical Society.

Mr. A. Ellis,
President & Research
Officer

Telephone: 587 1159

Mrs E. Wright,
Treasurer

Telephone: 599 4884

Mrs B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer

Mrs B. Perkins,

Publicity Officer

Telephone: 587 9164

Mrs E. Haney,
Social Secretary

Telephone: 545 4650

Mrs K. Banks,
Secretary

Telephone: 545 5540

Mrs E. Eardley,
Bulletin Editor

Telephone: 57 8078

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According to Dr. Melford Funk the following are the most expressive words in the English language:

The most bitter - Alone

The most cruel - Revenge

The most beautiful - Love

The most peaceful - Tranquility

The most reverend - Mother

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The three sweetest words in the English language are: Cheque enclosed herewith

Friendship Book 1971