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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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KOGARAH 2217

May, 1988

Dear Friend and Member,

The May Meeting will be held as follows:

Date Friday, 20th May, 1988 at 8 p.m.

Place Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale

Business General

Syllabus Item

Peter Sage presents 'Celebration in Sydney' surrounding our Bicentennial Australia Day including the First Fleet, during the voyage, arriving in Botany Bay and in Sydney Harbour, the 'Tall Ships' and the 'Parade of Sail', the fireworks and the City illuminations. Surely a night to remember.

Supper Roster

Mrs Mendoza and Mrs Loring

LADIES PLEASE BRING A PLATE

Mr. A. Ellis,
President and Research
Officer

Mrs J. Price,
Minute Secretary

Mrs B. Perkins,
Secretary and
Publicity Officer

587 1159

587 7407

587 9164

Mrs E. Wright,
Treasurer

Miss D. Row,
Asst. Treasurer

Mrs E. Eardley,
Bulletin Editor

599 4884

59 8078

The Golden Chain of Friendship

Friendship is a golden chain, the links are friends so dear,
And like a rare and precious jewel its treasured more each year;
It's clasped together firmly with a love that's deep and true,
And it's rich with happy memories and fond recollections too.
Time can't destroy its beauty, for, as long as memory lives,
Years can't erase the pleasure that joy of friendship gives;
For friendship is a priceless gift that can't be bought or sold,
But to have an understanding friend is worth far more than gold;
And the golden chain of friendship is a strong and blessed tie,
Binding kindred hearts together as the years go passing by.

Helen Steiner Rice - 'Just for you'

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

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. Book Nos. 8, 9 and 10 have been compiled by Mrs Bronwyn Perkins.

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|--|---------------|
| No.1 "The Wolli Creek Valley" | Book Nos. 1-8 |
| No.2 "Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway" | \$2.50 each |
| | plus postage |
| No.3 "Saywells Tramway - Rockdale to Lady Robinsons Beach" | |
| No.4 "Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway" | |
| No.5 "Our Heritage in Stone" | |
| No.6 "All Stations to Como" | |
| No.7 "Tempe and the Black Creek Valley" | |
| No.8 "Early Churches of the St.George District" | |
| No.9 "Early Settlers of the St.George District Volume 1" | Book Nos.9-10 |
| | \$4.00 each |
| | plus postage |
| No.10 "Early Settlers of the St.George District Volume 2" | |

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 | 59 4259 (after 8 p.m.) |
| Mrs E. Eardley | 59 8078 |
| Mr. A. Ellis | 587 1159 |

NEW MEMBERS AND VISITORS ARE WELCOME

Have you volunteered for the Supper Roster? More help is needed!!!

2N3C-FM - 90.1 - ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

1988 - MONDAY EVENINGS - 5.15 - 5.30p.m.

| | | | | | | |
|----------|---|------------|---|---|---|-----------|
| TAPE 246 | - | 4th April | - | Currency Lass 1 | - | C.Wilding |
| TAPE 247 | - | 11th April | - | Currency Lass 2 | - | C.Wilding |
| TAPE 248 | - | 18th April | - | Currency Lass 3 | - | C.Wilding |
| TAPE 249 | - | 25th April | - | Vintage Years, G.P.O.Tower. | - | A.Ellis |
| TAPE 250 | - | 2nd May | - | 200 years ago sailed up Pitt Street. | - | A.Ellis |
| TAPE 251 | - | 9th May | - | Embroidered History | - | J. Price |
| TAPE 252 | - | 16th May | - | Fort Street School. | - | J.Price |
| TAPE 253 | - | 23rd May | - | Golden Grain Mineral Resources Inland Transport Town Halls and The Overlanders. | - | J.Scholer |
| TAPE 254 | - | 30th May | - | First Theatres, Fire Brigade & Steam Navigation. | - | J.Scholer |

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The session set down for Monday 2nd May begins yet another year of historical segments, on a weekly basis from The St. George Historical Society, broadcast over Community Access Radio - 2N3C-FM.

Any members wishing to join the list of voluntary readers please contact: Bronwyn Perkins - Ph:5879164.

An interesting experience in this the Bicentennial Year.

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THE EARLY SETTLEMENT OF WOLLI CREEK.

- Reprint from St. George
Historical Society
Bulletin - April 1964.
- Gifford Eardley.

The Wolli Creek, one of the principal tributaries of Cook's River, junctions with the latter immediately adjacent to the railway bridge at Tempe. In former years its upper waters flowed complacently through a gently sloped forested area which merged into sandstone hill country in the vicinity of the present day Bexley North Railway Station. These sandstone hills were covered with indigenous flora of great beauty and even today small remnants of gum tree forest remain within the confines of Girralween Park at Earlwood. The rocky escarpment continues along the northern and then western banks of the stream to Nanny-goat Hill at Turella. At the old Arncliffe Street ford (now Henderson Street) the lower waters become brackish and subject to tidal influence, although the banks are still a waving mass of reeds, the haunt of reed-warblers, grass-birds, ibis and coot.

East of the ford the stream follows a winding course through alluvial flats until salt water is reached in the vicinity of Unwin's Hill which, at this point is contiguous with the northern bank. Here the stream widened and flowed through a dense forest of swamp oaks established on the flood lands just above normal high water mark. This location has completely lost its trees and its once pristine beauty has been despoiled by vast quantities of household rubbish dumped on its site. Curving to the north the stream avoids the low rocky knoll which became the site of Tempe House and near the Tempe Railway Station mingles its waters with Cook's River.

Wolli Creek has a length of approximately six miles and drains an area which lays approximately midway between the watersheds of Georges River and Cook's River.

For the purposes of this narrative it is thought best to trace the development of settlement along the meanderings of Wolli Creek by conveniently commencing from Rocky Point Road at the intersection of old time Arncliffe Street. Incidentally the name "Wolli" is understood to have the aboriginal meaning of "Camping Place". It is proposed to give a description as far as my personal explorations of the area have permitted, of the various residences and farm houses which had been erected at different times prior to the beginning of the present century.

Before commencing our journey westwards we may give a backward glance across the samphire marsh land laying eastwards from Rocky Point Road to "Bonnie Doon", a palatial residence nestling in the lee of a grove of magnificent Moreton Bay figtrees, which, unfortunately have recently been butchered.

The original builder of "Bonnie Doon" has still to be ascertained by the writer but a family named McCrae was in occupation around the eighteen-ninties. Latterly the grounds have been utilised for golfing purposes, the old home being demolished and a club house erected in its stead.

At the northern approach to Cook's River Bridge (or the earlier dam located on the site) could be seen the two kilns where Mr Caincross burnt shells to make lime for the building of old Sydney town. It is understood the furnaces were located either on or near Holbeach Avenue at the head of the boat harbour.

Opposite the intersection of Arncliffe Street and Rocky Point Road were three wharves (the larger being known as the Main Wharf) against the Cook's River western bank where sleepers necessary for the construction of the suburban section of the Illawarra Railway were unloaded. These sleepers were cut in the forests of the Northern Rivers and brought to the entrance of Botany Bay by schooners and other sailing craft. The timber was unloaded into flat-bottomed and square-ended scows and taken by a small exuberant-voiced tug-boat to the aforementioned three wharves. Here the sleepers were unloaded by a crane and placed on small railway trucks for haulage by horses to the contractor's depot located midway between Sydenham (then Marrickville) and St. Peters Railway Stations. This little known tramway crossed Rocky Point Road on the level and skirted the southern bank of Cook's River between the road and the Illawarra Railway bridges. Approaching the vicinity of the latter the tramway curved northwards and, crossing the river by means of a temporary trestle, followed the route of the present line to the depot. It is of interest to note that the materials for the construction of the railway bridge at Como were taken over this tramway from the depot to the wharves and then by punt and tugboat to Botany Bay, along the channel to Georges River and thence upstream to Como. It may be assumed that the tramway was removed about 1883 or 1884.

The building of the Western Suburbs Sewer Main, the fine viaducts of which can be seen in many places stretching across the Arncliffe flats, also brought traffic to the wharves at Tempe. Bricks in vast quantities were landed from punts and taken to the scene of operations by a more or less unending stream of horse-drawn carts.

After this digression we turn westwards and immediately on our left, with its frontage to Rocky Point Road, is the old Tempe Family Hotel. This two storeyed hostelry flanked by tall Norfolk Island Pines and having age old gum trees in the back yard, appears to have been opened by Mr McInnes. The hotel eventually came into the possession of Mr Jacobs and was subsequently renamed the "Gladstone". It was closed about 1911 under the provisions of the Local Option Act and remained in a more or less derilect condition until the 1950's, when it was demolished and the site utilised as a garage.

In its heyday, before the coming of the Illawarra Railway, mine host advertised in the South Coast newspapers that the hotel was most convenient for visitors travelling by road to the city. Their horses could be provided with ample agistment, the menu and liquor list all that could be desired and horse coaches left Tempe at specified times for Sydney. In the vicinity of the Gladstone Hotel, perhaps next door, was the general store of William Smithson who catered for the needs of the local village of Tempe (the name given to the hamlet clustered around the old "Tempe" homestead south of Cooks River) and also provided postal facilities for the district at large.

We now enter the eastern extremity of Arncliffe Street, a truly rural thoroughfare, with the Tempe Family Hotel agistment paddock and sundry down-at-heel stables and sheds on our left and a rock walled cutting, marking the southern boundary of Mr Spark's "Tempe House" property on our right. The shingled roofed stables, wash house and out buildings of "Tempe House" are next met, perched on high ground above the level of Arncliffe Street; access to these structures was made by a private road which led through the property from Rocky Point Road, the access gate still being in use today.

"Tempe House" was built about 1828 by Alexander Brodie Spark, a business man of Sydney, on the southern bank of Cook's River. It was a typical and elegant country residence of the period, which contained six large rooms in addition to the usual kitchen scullery and other appointments. The grounds were extensive and laid out in gardens and orchards. Many native trees were retained and mingled well with European tree planting.

Mr Spark died in October, 1856 and the property was ultimately divided into a large number of small allotments ranged around the then newly constructed Bonar and Spark Streets in the western area. Amongst later owners of "Tempe House" was Mr Richardson who subsequently moved to "Wickham" a fine house erected on the western side of Rocky Point Road immediately north of the Forrest Road intersection.

The Sisters of the Good Samaritan, a Roman Catholic order, came into the possession of "Tempe House" early in the 1880's and opened their well known laundry, St. Magdalen's Retreat in 1887. These good people have kept the home in excellent repair and the old atmosphere has been retained amidst sylvan surroundings.

Illawarra Street, which linked with the old road to Wollongong and places beyond, left Arncliffe Street at a point almost opposite and south of "Tempe House" stables. This once main thoroughfare has been by-passed with the coming of the Illawarra Railway and relegated to a secondary street serving the surrounding industrial area which has developed in recent years.

At the south-western corner of Illawarra Road and Arncliffe Street was located the stables and coach houses of the Circular Quay-Tempe line of horse omnibuses. Although plying from the northern side of Cook's River Bridge the busmen always carried passengers to and from the depot. In the depot yard was a large pond in daily use for watering and bathing the horses. All trace of this once busy scene was removed when the area was adapted for tramway store purposes.
