



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL
Registered by Australia Post 6/9 Austral Street,
NBH 0335 KOGARAH 2217

June, 1988

Dear Friend and Member,

The June Meeting will be held as follows:

Date Friday, 17th June, 1988 at 8 p.m.

Place Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale

Business General

Syllabus Item

Kevin Little will speak about 'Stained Glass' in Sydney. We have had the pleasure and privilege of hearing Kevin on previous occasions, his talks are most informative and entertaining.

Supper Roster

Mrs Robinson and Mrs Teychenne

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

Join the Crowd

The Society for the "Elimination of Exclamation Marks" was recently established. Its members consist of those people who are no longer surprised at anything (G.F.C.)

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.

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!!!

2NBC-FM - 90.1 - ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
1988 - MONDAY EVENINGS - 5.15 - 5.30p.m.

TAPE 255 -	6th June	- First to Australian Alps, Sugar Cane, Museums, Canberra	- H.Loring
TAPE 256 -	13 th June	- Botanic Gardens, Australia's Olympic Games, Silver Lode.	H.Loring
TAPE 257 -	20th June	- First Telephone, Law Courts and Royal Australian Navy.	D. Row
TAPE 258 -	27th June	- Govt.House, First Million Post-War Migrants, 1st Fort.	D. Row
TAPE 259 -	4th July	- Paper Mill, Artesian Bore, First to Jenolan Caves, First Australians.	M.Callister
TAPE 260 -	11th July	- Gov.General, General Markets, Observatory, Hydro-Elec.Scheme, 1st Sydney Ferry.	M.Callister
TAPE 261 -	18th July	- Aust.Inventions, Reaping Machine, etc. Preserving Meat.	J.Scholer
TAPE 262 -	25th July	- Aust's Overseas Airline, Lifesavers, 1st Overseas Contingent.	J.Scholer
TAPE 263 -	1st August	- Pearling, Cattle Industry, Radio Stn.	A. Ellis
TAPE 264 -	8th August	- Adelaide Ironside, LaPerouse Museum, Walter Barrett & St.Peter's Church.	A. Ellis
TAPE 265 -	15th August	- Colonial Medical Service Part 1	L.Abigail
TAPE 266 -	22nd August	- Colonial Medical Service Part 2	L.Abigail
TAPE 267 -	29th August	- Places of Historical Interest-Sydney.	A.Ellis

A RUM OLD TRADE ...

- Louisa Costa
 Good Weekend
 Sydney Morning Herald
 23rd January 1988.

John Stevenson at work. A cooper crafts barrels without using nails or glue - it's a dying art.

After 39 years spent perfecting his craft, John Stevenson, a short, wiry 55-year-old with blackened hands, has been asked to stop making wooden rum barrels.

Stevenson, one of the last of Sydney's coopers, attributes it to changing tastes and rising costs: "Australians just don't drink rum like they used to," he said. "At one time, everyone at the bar would order a schooner of beer and a rum chaser. Even the navy would include rum in its rations.

"It used to be the working man's drink but now it's more expensive than a nip of whisky."

This, and the advent of safer, more durable, stainless steel drums have led to Stevenson's retirement at the end of this month. He's now slowly converting his oak barrels into flowerpots.

Measuring well under 180 centimetres, Stevenson claims to be the shortest cooper in Australia - the trade usually calls for a large, strong build able to lift barrels weighing as much as 200 kilograms each.

A cooper is valued for his ability to craft a water-tight container from wooden staves and iron hoops without the use of nails or glue. He initials each one and, as time goes by, has to account for and repair any leaks.

Stevenson, who prefers to work with French or Persian oak, has handled at least a million barrels since he was first apprenticed as a cooper at the age of 16 at a Mascot brewery. "A million sounds a bit cocky, doesn't it?" he said, "Better say half a million."

Working in a brewery where he could sample alcohol at such an early age was "like putting a kid in an ice-cream shop," he said. These days, he does not drink at all.

His brother and brother-in-law also joined the trade at a time when there were 25 cooperages in Sydney, employing hundreds of men. At last count, Stevenson found only 20 coopers.

"We'd be working in teams of seven men & we'd turn out 250 of the smaller barrels a day," he said. "Now it takes me a week to make one." The painstaking process of replacing a split stave can take him two to three days.

"Magical things happen inside an oak barrel," he said. "Wood takes the impurities out of alcohol and improves the flavour."
