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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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7 Lynwood St
Blakehurst

MAY 1991

NEXT MEETING

DATE: 8pm Friday 17th May

LOCATION: Council Chambers, 1st Flr Rockdale Town Hall, Princes Hwy
Rockdale

BUSINESS: Report to members regarding arrangement for 30th
Anniversary Reunion and Arncliffe to Lydham Hall
History Walk

GUEST SPEAKER:

"JOSEPH BROKENSHERE"

Joseph Brokenshire was a local photographer of considerable talent and ability. His photographs provide and invaluable record of the Sans Souci area as it was in the early part of this century.

Mr Garry Darby, himself a photographer of note, will give a talk on the man and how his wonderful collection of photographs was miraculously saved for posterity.

SUPPER ROSTER: Members please bring a plate.

OFFICE BEARERS

PRESIDENT: Bernard Sharah 599 1971

SECRETARY: Val Beehag 546 2819

TREASURER: Margaret Persen 771 5461

VICE-PRESIDENT: Don Sinclair

RESEARCH OFFICER: Arthur Ellis 587 1159

PUBLICITY OFFICER: Joan Fairhall

BULLETIN EDITOR: Bernard Sharah 599 1971

ST GEORGE HERITAGE FAIR CO-ORDINATOR: Joan Byrne

SOCIAL SECRETARY: Vacant

LYDHAM HALL COMMITTEE:

Miss B. Otton, Bernard Sharah, Mrs Val Beehag

AUDITOR: Mrs L. Thompson

ALL CORRESPONDENCE TO THE SECRETARY, 7 LYNWOOD AVE BLAKEHURST

HISTORY WALK

In view of the success last year of the Bexley History Walk it was decided to conduct a similiar one this year to coincide with the 30th Anniversary of the Society's founding.

It will commence at Arncliffe Railway Station and continue along Forest Rd to Lydham Hall.

We will have a number of people conducting the tour and there should be sufficient written guides to supply a large attendance.

DATE: Sunday 16th June

TIME: 1pm

STARTING POINT: Arncliffe Railway Station

Afternoon tea will be provided at Lydham Hall at the conclusion of the walk.

COST: FREE

DO SOMETHING DIFFERENT - VISIT A CACTUS SHOW!

DAY TOUR 25TH MAY 1991

RYDE CACTUS SHOW, HUNTERS HILL

Bus departs Cross St, Hurstville 9am and Rockdale Town Hall 9.15am
9.30am Campsie Station

ITINERARY:

- * Approx. 2 hours at Sherringham's Nursery
- * 12 noon Ryde Historical Society will show us over "Willandra", historic house-museum and art show.
- * 1 to 2pm, Top Ryde School for cactus show and lunch.
- * After lunch a quick look at St Anne's Church and graveyard.
- * Complete the day with a trip around Hunters Hill with a commentary by the same very pleasant coach driver from our Carcoar trip.
- * Return to Hurstville approx. 5pm.

ALL THIS FOR \$18 INCLUDING MORNING TEA, LUNCH AND ENTRANCE FEES.
So please book early! Phone Joan Fairhall 546 5555.

ST GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S
30TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION

Are you unable to attend our monthly meetings but would love to have a get-together with old friends in the Society?

Well, we are planning an afternoon tea party at Lydham Hall to celebrate the 30th Anniversary of the Society. It will be a great opportunity to share a few memories with fellow members you may not have seen for some time.

Afternoon tea will be provided FREE in the pleasant surroundings of the grounds of Lydham Hall.

For those of you who have transport difficulties we may be able to provide transport.

We need to have a good indication of numbers fairly quickly so if you are interested please complete the booking form and return to :-

Mrs J. Byrne
36 Watkin St
Rockdale 2216

Joan Byrne will be happy to assist with your enquiries on phone no. 567 8641

DATE: SATURDAY 15TH JUNE

TIME: 2PM

LOCATION: GROUNDS OF LYDHAM HALL, LYDHAM AVE, ROCKDALE.

IMPORTANT - PLEASE NOTE: THOSE MEMBERS THAT COULD ASSIST IN PREPARING SOMETHING SPECIAL TO EAT FOR THE OCCASION WOULD BE VERY MUCH APPRECIATED.

ALSO IF MEMBERS HAVE MEMORABILIA THAT WOULD BE OF INTEREST, PLEASE BRING IT ALONG - WE WILL HAVE DISPLAY BOARDS FOR THEIR PRESENTATION.

30TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION

BOOKING FORM

NAME:

ADDRESS:

PHONE NO.:

I will/will not need transport to attend.

"A GRAVE LOOK AT HISTORY"

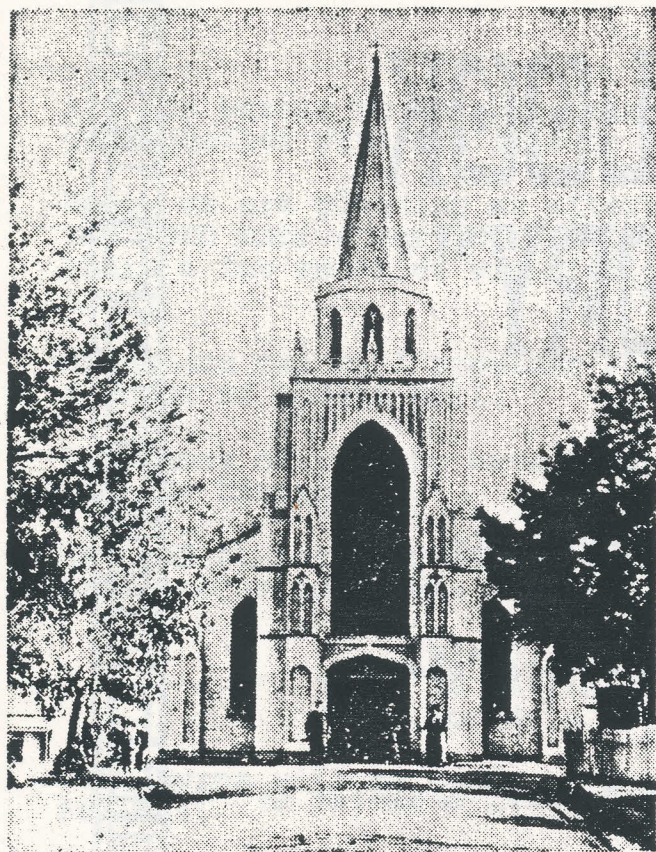
OPEN AFTERNOON AT ST PETERS ANGLICAN CHURCH

SATURDAY, 11TH MAY 1991

- 1.00p.m. Audio-visual on church and local history.
- 1.30p.m. Guided tour of graveyard.
- 2.30p.m. Organ recital by Michael Deasey, organist St Andrew's Cathedral.
- 3.15p.m. Audio-visual repeated.
- 3.30p.m. Guided tour repeated.



FARISH OF COOKS RIVER, 187 PRINCES HIGHWAY,
ST PETERS Tel: 512 332



LOST: A CHURCH STEEPLE

THE third oldest church in or around Sydney, St. Peter's, Cook's River, has been celebrating its 125th anniversary.

A reader has unearthed a rare early photograph of the church, taken in 1868. It shows in its pristine dignity the fine Gothic spire, part of the original design by architect John Bibbs.

Efforts were made recently to restore the spire, which had fallen

into dangerous decay, but a fund to save it failed. Earlier this year the hand-made brick and ironbark tower and copper spire, 60ft high overall, were demolished. The Sydney firm that bought the copper sheathing is so impressed with the metal's forging that it is to be kept for display. Picture (right) shows St. Peter's today, spireless, and likely to remain so indefinitely.

The church was built by

free labour on land donated by Sydney's first merchant prince, Robert Campbell. The foundation-stone was laid on July 9, 1838, Bishop Broughton (first and only Bishop of Australia) conducting the service. After the ceremony, a wealthy parish-ioner provided a lavish picnic lunch for 100 people at which, according to the contemporary Press report, bumpers were drunk with a freedom that

would seem distinctly unclerical these days, and "joy seemed to pervade every bosom."

The original Parish of St. Peter's was enormous, stretching from South Head to Concord. One of the church's early Chapels of Ease (for parishioners who had too far to travel to Petersham) was St. Mark's, Darling Point. In 1875, the interior of St. Peter's was altered by E. T. Blacket. In 1906 a new

rectory replaced the original one that can be seen to the left of the church in the 1868 photograph.

Among well-known pioneers buried in the original church graveyard are a number of relatives of Governor King. An unusual feature of St. Peter's is the use of Australian wildflower motifs in several of its memorial stained-glass windows.

—T. v S.

PART 2.

A HISTORY OF THE ARNCLIFFE
CATHOLIC PARISH
 by Mrs Molly McDonnell

By now, the school-church was beginning to outlive its usefulness as a school and church; and the parish priest at the time, Father O'Reilly, by exhortation and example, stimulated his people in their generous endeavours towards progress. A new church would have to be built. Land was first acquired in Barden Street, but it was considered unsuitable for parochial requirements. It was profitably disposed of and a block of land on the crest of Forest Road, which was considered suitable for a church site, was purchased. The people, urged on by their priest, set about the task of forming the nucleus for the establishment of a building fund, and various functions were organised for this purpose, but much water was to flow under the bridge before fulfillment of their plans.

In November, 1923, Father O'Reilly was transferred to Picton, and then came Father Rafferty from the historic town of Parramatta. With his business acumen, he immediately saw the advantages of acquiring a property near the school-church; within two years, Arncliffe parish boasted a presbytery, free of debt, which could compare favourably with any in the Archdiocese. Prior to this, the priest had to live in rooms in Wickham Street; but later on, a little cottage was rented; and from humble beginnings, St Francis Xavier's commenced its career.

On 17th March, 1928, a committee comprising - H. Hardge, J. Wilkie, John Geary, Joseph Giles and B.J. Bailey, forwarded a report to the Cathedral, stating that they were of the opinion that the new church should be built on a site adjoining the convent and not higher up on Forest Road. Objections were raised by some parishioners that the site adjoining the convent was too close to the hotel, but the sisters said "that at no time had they experienced any difficulty with regard to the proximity of the hotel". It was agreed that by building the church adjoining the convent, all the parochial buildings would be in one block - the church, the convent and school, with ample playground and the presbytery near by.

The total cost of the church was to be in the vicinity of 14,000 pounds. Now to raise this considerable amount of money at that time much hard work had to be done. Father Rafferty would call meetings, and the parishioners came in their numbers; many suggestions for raising money would then be put forth by them. House parties galore would be held; functions in the then Baker's Hall in Belmore Street, monthly dances organised by the Children of Mary, queen competitions, car drives, St Patrick's Concert was always an annual event and even Sacred Concerts on Sunday evening after Benediction - Admission, a silver coin. Bazaars would be held in Baker's Hall and there was great rivalry as to which stall could make the most money (all good business, of course) but usually, all did very well: and considering there was not much money about in those days, the end result would be in the vicinity of 1,000 pounds or more; in fact, the record for 1931 was 2,320 pounds.

In March, 1932 the parishioners of Arncliffe rejoiced at the solemn dedication to God's service of His new home amongst them. It was the culmination of the hopes of years - the crystalising into a reality of a dream which at times seemed as shadowy and intangible as the stuff dreams are made of.

Raised to the dignity of parish in 1917, with a census showing barely one hundred families within its boundaries, in a few years the Arncliffe parish, which had been the Cinderella of the two parishes to which it had previously been attached, had acquired the equipment of church, school, convent and presbytery, which was as complete in detail of ecclesiastical requirements as are the buildings themselves handsome ornaments of the district. But all this was not accomplished without much hard work, forebodings and disappointments at times, but withal, sustained generosity by the Catholic population.

St Francis Xavier's Church, a cynosure of all eyes, is a combination of Celtic and Romanesque architecture, and the standard of workmanship is a revelation of the perfection to which Australian artisans had attained. It is impossible to adequately describe the beauties of either the exterior or the interior of the church but a comment on a few of the main features might be interesting. The building is 116 feet long and 41 feet wide and has seating accomodation for 625 persons. The round tower, surmounted by a cross, stands 107 feet above the footpath and so delicately tapered that the bell-tower chamber is barely 2 feet narrower than the verger's room on the ground level. The High Altar, together with the Altars of the Sacred Heart and the Blessed Virgin are built of Cudgegong and Kaloolah marble, and with the pulpit and sanctuary rails also of marble, the Sanctuary is a very handsome and imposing one. The Sisters' Chapel, contiguous to the Sanctuary, was entered through a cloistered passage from the Convent, but with the many changes that have taken place, it is no longer used for this purpose. The seats and all the fittings throughout the church are of polished silky oak.

Mr. Clement Clancy was the architect of the church whose ideas have been so beautifully expressed in it. Mr R.M.Bowcock was the builder of our magnificent church, and the beautiful stone-masonry is a tribute to the skill of the late Mr Lawrence Trainor.

The bell which weighs over one ton was to be tolled by an electrical contrivance, but this was found to be unworkable and so it had to be rung by hand. Over the years, several bell-ringers faithfully carried out the task, at 6am, 12 noon and 6pm daily. Its chimes could be heard far and wide. On Sundays the bell would be rung at 6am calling the faithful to 6.30am Mass and then rung three minutes before Mass began, to remind them that they had only three minutes to get there in time. This operation applied to all three Masses. This was all very effective, but sad to say the bell no longer rings due to environmental pressures.

Editor's Note: This article is a compilation of excerpts from Mrs Molly McDonnell's (a St George Historical Society member) "Arncliffe Parish History"