



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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7 Lynwood St
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JUNE 1991



Jean Scott

NEXT MEETING

"GIRLS WITH GRIT"

During World War II thousands of Australian women joined the Land Army. Their task was to tend the farms while the men went to war. Their contribution to the war effort has been largely overlooked.

Author, Jean Scott, will recount their achievements, experiences and tribulations.

DATE: Friday 8pm 21st June

LOCATION: 1st Flr, Town Hall
Princes Hwy. Rockdale.

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 ST BLAKEHURST

ARNCLIFFE TO LYDHAM HALL
HISTORY WALK

This is a final reminder about our history walk. The walk will be held regardless of weather. So, in light of recent events, don't forget to bring an umbrella. We look forward to seeing you!

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

THE DAY TRIP TO "WILLANDRA" AND CACTUS SHOW

Despite a wet week, Saturday 25th May proved to be a very pleasant day as 42 passengers set off for Ryde and morning tea, sandwiches and cake at the Cactus Show.

We decided to by-pass Sherringham's Nursery to allow more time to soak in the glorious views from the verandahs and especially the upstairs windows of "Willandra". Just imagine living in such a house! A vibrant autumn leaved vine greeted us at the back entrance as we were shown over the house and the Art Show by two members of the Ryde Historical Society. Back to the Cactus Show for lunch, a sausage sizzle, salads, rockmelon grapes and cream cakes and a most leisurely look around the show.

Instead of the quick look at St Annes and the graveyard that we planned, we were fortunate to have an expert offer to get the keys and show us through the church and graveyard, with a wonderful commentary and a view of Granny Smith's grave.

Of course, we were unable to cruise around Hunter's Hill after that but as there is a very strong historical society there, plans are underway to run another trip in which we'll be able to spend longer than previously planned at both Sherringham's Nursery and Hunter's Hill.

We stopped at Top Ryde for those who need to vote and then back to the Cactus Show for afternoon tea where two men remarked "These people can't be eating again!" Back to work for me and back to the bus for the trip where all announced that they had really enjoyed their day.

JOAN FAIRHALL

A GRAVE LOOK AT HISTORY

It was pleasing to see so many St George Historical Society members at the guided tour of St Peter's Church and graveyard. The afternoon was entitled "A Grave Look at History" but it turned out to be a very enjoyable day despite the cold weather. It was conducted by Laurel Horton who has been doing a wonderful job creating interest in this very historic church. The graveyard itself is a goldmine of information about the people of the Cook's River, their attitudes and circumstances.

As well as the good attendance by our Society it was interesting to note four generations of the Preddy family were present - Mrs Jean Preddy, her daughter and her grand-daughter, Kate Ferguson (and husband, Peter) with babe in arms.

LAST MEETING

Our scheduled speaker, Mr Garry Darby, was unable to attend due to work commitments. So, with 3 days notice, I called for help and Joan Hatton came to our rescue.

Joan gave a talk on "The Kogarah Story". It was illustrated with slides and provided an interesting look at the formation and development of the Municipality of Kogarah.

Thank you, Joan, we are indebted to you.

WANTED: A BULLETIN EDITOR FOR 1991-2

Due to family commitments (three young children under 7) I will not be re-nominating for the position of Bulletin Editor at the Annual General Meeting in July. Ideally, we need someone with computer skills. So, if you know someone who fits the bill (even if they are not current members) please let me know as soon as possible.

Bernard Sharah

THE WAY WE WERE

- THIRTY YEARS AGO

Reproduced in this issue is a copy of the earliest bulletin of the Rockdale Historical Society as we were then called.

It gives a fair indication of the type of society as it was then.

We were enthusiastic about the recording of history and the preservation of historic buildings. Much of the knowledge we have acquired has been published in our monthly bulletins and our booklets.

There was a dedicated core of researchers including Gifford and Eileen Eardley, Phillip Geeves, Vincent Saunders, Ron Rathbone and Arthur Ellis.

Our efforts to preserve buildings of historic interest were not as successful one would have hoped but it was important that a group of people did show their concern in an era not sympathetic to this ideal. The society voiced its concern over buildings such as "Rosevale Villa", "Bray's Cottage" and others.

One of the positive moves the society made in the early days was to enter a large number of local buildings in a Historic Homes Competition run by the Sydney Morning Herald. It was an attempt to promote appreciation of history and "heritage" much the same as we are doing today with our history walks and outings. I believe the society today is returning to the values and aspirations of those formative years.

Above all, it is important that we get back to business of recording what we can of the past. If you have something you feel may be of value to the society please advise our research officer Arthur Ellis (587 1159). This may be in the form of documents, photographs, memorabilia or your own recollections in written or oral form. For instance the article in this issue of the bulletin is simply a letter from one of our members recalling her childhood. But it contains quite a number of references to well known local identities and places and is interesting for that alone. So please give it some thought. We don't necessarily need to retain the original material, just allow us to make copies.



ROCKDALE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

OFFICIAL BULLETIN.

VOL. 1. NO. 2

APRIL, 1962

GRATIS.

NEXT MEETING

PLACE:- Council Chamber, TOWN HALL, ROCKDALE.

DATE:- Friday next, 13th APRIL, 1962 at 8.0 P.M.

We are extremely fortunate to have as our Guest speakers -

MR. MORTON HERMAN B. Arch., A.R.A.I.A., A.R.I.B.A., leading Sydney Architect and Member of the Royal Historical Society who will speak on why old buildings should be preserved and

MISS J. SOUTHAN who suggested and organised the current Sydney Morning Herald's Historic Homes Contest.

Your presence on this occasion is particularly requested and you are invited to bring along any interested friends.

SUCCESSFUL FIRST OUTING

Despite very overcast conditions more than 50 people journeyed to Carss Park recently for the first Historical Expedition organized by our society.

Mr. Harold Coxhead, an old resident of the area read members a paper he had prepared on the area and afternoon tea was taken in the Life-Saving Hall.

When the weather cleared, members inspected the area where the film "Bush Christmas" had been produced, the grave of the Carss family and their 96 year old sandstone home which still stands on the headland overlooking the shark-proof enclosure.

Our next outing will be to Arncliffe where Mr. G. Eardley will be our guide.

Remember the date, Saturday, April 28th assembling at the Rockdale Town Hall at 2.0 p.m.

If you are interested, ring the Secretary, Ald. R. W. Rathbone LW 4813 for details.

Both members and their friends will be most welcome.

ROCKDALE TO ENTER HOMES IN S.M. HERALD COMPETITION.

At the last meeting of the Rockdale Historical Society, it was decided to approach the owners of a number of fine old homes in the Municipality to see if they would allow them to be entered in the above contest which closes in October.

High on our list are ^{Alexander} James Brodie Sparks, "The Retreat" (Good Samaritan Convent, Arncliffe) which is 135 years old and Hannah Laycock's cottage at Kingsgrove (at least 150 years old).

A special committee set up by the Society has listed possible entries and the Secretary has been busily photographing them ready for cataloguing.

Ald. Rathbone reports that whilst roaming around the back streets of Arncliffe one recent Saturday afternoon looking for likely entries, he discovered an illegal S.P. set-up in full swing.

This is certainly an OLD Australian habit with many HISTORIC associations but it was more than his life was worth to try to photograph it.

FIRST HOMES ENTERED IN COMPETITION.

Following Mr. Herman's address, it was decided that a complete survey of all the old houses in the Rockdale Municipality should be undertaken with a view to entering them in the "Herald" Competition.

Already the Secretary in conjunction with Mr. G. Eardley has carried out a preliminary survey of Banksia, Arncliffe, Bexley and part of Rockdale.

Of 46 photographs of buildings so far, submitted to Mr. Herman, four have been declared outstanding.

These are:-

- 1). The SALVATION ARMY GIRLS' HOME, in Wollongong Road, Arncliffe, the iron-work of which is considered to be some of the finest in the metropolitan area.
- 2). The fine old sandstone mansion LYDHAM HALL, in Lydham Avenue, Rockdale, which was erected in 1855.
- 3). "ELYSIAN", the lovely old sandstone cottage on the hill next to Arncliffe School whose iron-work has to be seen to be believed.
- 4). The BEXLEY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH, on the corner of Sackville Street and Forest Road. Built about 1887, Mr. Herman described it as a "gem".

The next section of the municipality to be surveyed will be the waterfront section from Kyeemagh to Sans Souci.

ROCKDALE'S FREE CHURCHES.

In our wanderings we have discovered that Rockdale, apart from its parish church of ST. JOHN'S, at one time or another boasted three "free" Anglican churches.

The Banksia Free Church which had recently been rebuilt has been a landmark for many years but did you know that in Pitt Lane, Rockdale still exists the derelict St. Stephen's Free Church and that in Prince's Highway between Rockdale and Kogarah - now used as an electric light fitting showroom is yet another.

We are anxious to know the origins of these churches and whether there is any connection between them and the Rev. Jimmy Clark, famous as the "defrocked" minister of St. Paul's Kogarah.

OUTING TO ARNCLIFFE.

Nearly 70 people turned up to our Arncliffe excursion last month when Mr. G. Eardley acted as our guide.

Commencing at historic "Tempe House" the 134 year old sandstone retreat of early Sydney merchant A. B. Spark, where the Mother Superior showed members the graciously furnished reception rooms and enclosed courtyard, we journeyed to "Bonnie Doon", formerly the home of the McRae family, to "Kirnbank" - the towering three-storey home of Justin McSweeney which abuts the Illawarra Railway line and the site of the recently demolished Primitive Methodist Church.

Afternoon tea was taken at the Arncliffe Senior Citizens' Centre by arrangement with the President, Mr. Nightingarl, and Mr. Eardley showed members a number of his very fine pencil sketches of old Arncliffe buildings.

VALE NORM. GUESS.

It is with very great regret that we record the passing of ex-Alderman Norman Guess - former Mayor of Rockdale and a member of the Committee of this Society.

He was a man with a deep seated sense of History and an outstanding love of the district he served so well for so long.

To his widow, Mrs. Dora Guess, we extend our sincere sympathy.

ROSEVALE VILLA TO BE SPARED.

After an unsuccessful attempt to save the historic Sandringham Hotel from demolition, the Society recently wrote to the Rockdale Council asking if it would be possible to save the beautiful sandstone cottage "Rosevale Villa", former home of the pioneer Iliffe family in Princes Highway which is threatened with demolition.

Although the council felt it could not purchase the building on its present site (U.C.V. £27,500) it was prepared to buy the building for re-erection on another site at a later date for refurnishing as an Historical Museum.

The Council has empowered the Mayor and Town Clerk to negotiate with the present owners for purchase of the building.

Mrs Ada Rayment, a long time member of this society, has provided this letter for publication. It recalls her childhood in a different era altogether. Our sincere thanks to Mrs Rayment.

Let's hope other members follow suit.

This is just a little bit about my life.

The Baker, Nelson and Collins families were all residents of Arncliffe. My mother was born in Hannam Street, Arncliffe in 1881. So were her brothers and sisters, and I was born in the same house as my mother in 1902.

My mother was married in the old Arncliffe Methodist Church in the year 1902 by the Reverend John William Moore, a member of the Methodist Church of Australia. My father was born in St Peters and later the Nelson family came to Arncliffe.

My mother and her brothers all attended the old Arncliffe School. I also attended the Arncliffe School from the age of four years till I was sixteen.

My mother, Isobel Baker, and her father and mother were living down the Wolli Creek area and told me in the early days Wolli Creek was teeming with beautiful fish. There were a lot of old families living in Arncliffe and my mother used to tell me about them. There were the Farleys, Judds, Claytons, Fortesques and the Collins and quite a few more.

There were beautiful homes, too. The Judds owned Athelstene and there was The Nest - the Salvation Army Girls Home it was in the early days. I remember The Towers and Rosslyn, a beautiful home on Forest Road with three storeys at the front and five at the back. It was built by Alfred Tabratt, who came out from England in the Eighties. In later years a doctor bought it. In my time it was Doctor Hearne. My father (Thomas Nelson) knew the doctor well and did a lot of stone work for him, and many were the times we visited Rosslyn with my father.

My father did a lot of stone work around Arncliffe. He put the stone around the Arncliffe Park and it still stands today. Earl Park was a small park down from Arncliffe Station and it was used as a football ground. People used to come in scores in the steam train to see the football games.

When I was age three my father bought land in Godfrey Street Banksia and built a nice home there and we lived there for many years. It was built on the side of a big hill called the Tar Hill and what fun we used to have going down the hill in our billy carts.

We used to attend the Free Church - my mother was a Sunday School teacher there. My elder sister and my brother Harry and I knew a lot of children and we used to have a lot of lovely concerts. Mr Perry built a lovely hall at the back of the Church so we were able to have our concerts and anniversaries in the hall.

We were very friendly with the Beehags. Mr James Beehag was superintendant of the Free Church. Walter Kirton lived with his parents nearby, and today Walter is the Pastor of the Church and is now Chaplain of the St George Hospital also.

Mr Beehag lived in a lovely house in Short Street Banksia. He had a large family and we knew them well. There was Dora, Nellie and I think it was Edna, who played the organ at the Church services, and brothers Clive, Albury and I think a couple more. When we had Sunday School picnics we used to hold them on the Beehag's property. We had great times.

My cousins belonging to the Baker family lived in Banksia and Rockdale. My uncle, Edward Baker, drove the water cart for the Rockdale Council in the early years and lived in a little stone cottage in George Street Rockdale which was built by convicts.

I was seven when the First World War was announced. At Arncliffe School we did a wonderful lot of knitting for the soldiers - hundreds of pairs of socks, scarves, gloves and balaclava caps etc. These goods were needed badly in France and other places where the soldiers were fighting as the weather was bitterly cold. Then of course we had the flu epidemic and the schools had to close except for the class going for exams. We had to wear masks.

Where we lived in Godfrey Street Banksia it had a large creek running through it and at the end of the street the creek went through a big tunnel. In wet weather it was very dangerous - it used to flood, and the water went out to the floodgates out Mascot way. Mr Perry was the Station Master and his little son was drowned. My brother saw the little boy testing the depth of the water but he lost his balance and was washed away. They found his body at the floodgates.

I was fourteen when my family moved back to Arncliffe. We had to cross the Banksia Park, up to Wollie Street and a long walk to Banksia and Arncliffe Stations. We attended the Rockdale Methodist Sunday School for a number of years and knew a number of families who lived in Rockdale, too.

Opposite the old Rockdale Town Hall there was a big paddock and later shops were built. On the paddock we had a picture show, owned by the Jacksons. It was built of galvanised iron and it was a great thrill when my parents took us to

show, owned by the Jacksons. It was built of galvanised iron and it was a great thrill when my parents took us to the pictures to see Charlie Chaplin. The fare cost threepence and we were there the night it was burnt down.

I was very interested in Amy Slade's letter to you. How well I and my family remember Shady Nook. We used to have lovely picnics there. My cousin, Jim Collins, was Captain of the Bexley Fire Station in the early days and we used to have wonderful processions to the Shady Nook. I remember on picnic and procession we had to raise money for the ambulance. My cousin was Britannia and she looked beautiful. She was dressed in a flowing white gown with the flag sewn on the front and she wore her brother's brass helmet. We were on a big lorry and there were about a dozen little girls riding with her and we were dressed in lovely crepe dresses made of paper representing flowers. We took off the prize for the best float and a lot of money was raised fro the ambulance.

Another thing that lives in my memory is when my father would take us children to swim in the old wooden baths. There were two baths then, one for the females and one for the gents. The Lady Robinson boat used to take trips to Kurnell.

My father worked for the Rockdale Council Quarry at Turella, and was killed in 1939. It may have been Mr Ellis's father or his grandfather whom my father worked for.

I met my husband and we were married in the Rockdale Methodist Church in 1932 by the Reverend H Bowden.

I may be leaving this district as I have not been too well and the home is far too big for one person. As my family lives in the St George area I would like to move back there.

I do wish the Society great success.

I remain
Yours faithfully
Ada Rayment (nee Nelson)