



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Registered by Aust.Post
NBH-0335

7 Lynwood St
Blakehurst

AUGUST 1991



16 AUGUST MEETING

"RESTORING OLD PHOTOGRAPHS"

SALLY COWELL AAIPP

Many people have old and treasured family photographs that are damaged or in poor condition. Photographic restoration artist, Sally Cowell, will demonstrate how they can be restored to pristine condition. See inside for details...

Office Holders

PRESIDENT: Bernard Sharah 599 1971

SECRETARY: Mrs Val Beehag 546 2819

TREASURER: Mrs Margaret Persen 771 5461

VICE-PRESIDENT: Noel Beehag 546 2819

RESEARCH OFFICER: Arthur Ellis 587 1159

SOCIAL SECRETARY: Mrs Joan Fairhall 546 5555

PROMOTIONS OFFICER: Mrs Joan Byrne 567 8641

BULLETIN EDITOR: Bernard Sharah 599 1971

LYDHAM HALL COMMITTEE:

Miss B.Otton, Bernard Sharah, Mrs V.Beehag

AUDITOR: Mrs L Thompson

All correspondence to the Secretary, 7 Lynwood St Blakehurst 2221

LAST MEETING

Our July meeting was the Annual General Meeting and the above officers were elected. The following committee recommendations were adopted by the Society.

Incorporation of the Society to be given first priority. No more outings to be organised until this goal achieved. It is anticipated that the incorporation proposal be ready for presentation to the Society for the September meeting.

Involvement of new and younger members was identified as the key to the future growth of the Society. A **"New Members Get-Together"** be held at Lydham Hall for the new members to meet the committee. This will take place on 11 August.

The normal general meeting in December is to be replaced this year with **Christmas Function in the grounds of Lydham Hall**. The date for this is yet to be nominated.

NEXT MEETING

"RESTORING OLD PHOTOGRAPHS"

SALLY COWELL AAIPP

To say that Sally Cowell has grappled with the world's worst photographs is an understatement. Her portfolion of restored pictures range from brides dresses having a pictured insect removed, to pimples being taken from young faces and angry husbands ripping up wedding photos when it's all over. Primarily though, Sally Cowell does restoration work on old photographs so if you have old family photos that have been damaged come along and Sally will show what can be done.

DATE: 8pm 16th August

LOCATION: Council Chambers, 1st Floor, Town Hall, Rockdale

AGENDA: PROPOSAL TO CHANGE MEETING DATE TO 4TH TUESDAY OF THE MONTH

SPECIAL NOTICE

PROPOSAL TO CHANGE MEETING NIGHT

A motion to change the Society's meeting night to the 4th Tuesday of the month will be proposed at the next meeting. It is the view of the President and the Committee that a change from our present Friday night meeting is essential if the Society is to continue to grow.

The present Friday meeting night is viewed by the President as the greatest single obstacle to securing the involvement of new and younger members. As it is our present meeting night has to compete with a great many other social activities. Whilst a change of meeting night may in the short term cause some inconvenience to the existing membership it is anticipated it will enable younger members to attend on a regular basis.

"AMAZING" FAUX PAS!

In last month's bulletin I commented that foundation member, Mrs Jean Faulkner was a "an amazing 92 year old". More amused than offended, Mrs Faulkner wrote to us and set the record straight. She is actually in her seventies. No wonder I was amazed. My humble apologies, Mrs Faulkner and I'm glad you have a sense of humour.

Whilst that incident provided some embarrassment on my part it wasn't my most embarrassing I have experienced. So, if you're interested I'll share this one with you. One night when my second daughter, Elizabeth, was a baby, I was trying to amuse her while my wife, Cathryn, cooked dinner. Elizabeth was hungry and cranky so in desperation I stuck a toy with a large suction cap onto my forehead. It worked! She was distracted by it so I kept it on until the meal was ready. Little did I know the suction cap was to leave a large dark circular bruise on my forehead for almost a week which I had to explain to all and sundry.

Bernard Sharah

THE MISSING BULLETIN

DECEMBER 1962

Recently, I had discussions with Sandra Mowbray, Rockdale Council's Local Studies Librarian regarding our incomplete collection of St George Historical Society Bulletins.

Missing was the very first issue, Volume 1, Number 1 (as the Rockdale Historical Society) and two others. Rockdale Library had the first issue and one other. Ironically, of the two supplied the first issue was one of the shortest Bulletins and the other (Volume 1, Number 9) was by far the longest, 25 pages.

Now, only one issue is missing - Volume 1, Number 2, December 1962. It is the second issue after the name was changed from Rockdale to St George Historical Society.

Perhaps one of our members has a copy. We are seeking not only to complete our own collection but Rockdale Library's as well.

SOCIETY NEWS

To return to the subject of Mrs Faulkner there was some discussion at the Reunion as to who was the longest serving member present. To settle the matter, a photocopy of the first membership record in 1961 is reproduced in this Bulletin. Mrs Faulkner was one of the very first to become a member. Other members still with us from that foundation year of 1961 are:

Mr J.Ellison, Chief Librarian of Rockdale Council until his retirement 5 years ago; Mr Jack Stead, a former president of the Society; Mrs Eileen Eardley, Secretary and Bulletin Editor of many years; regular attendees, Mr and Mrs E Downs, and our patron and founding Secretary Alderman Ron Rathbone.

NOTICE BOARD

HISTORICAL DISPLAY - BAYSIDE PLAZA

For two weeks beginning Monday 9 September Bayside Plaza, which is the shopping centre at the Resort Hotel, Brighton-le-Sands will present a historical display of costumes, photographs and movies. Bayside Plaza stands on the site formerly occupied by Thomas Saywell's New Brighton Hotel. Saywell, his railway and his hotel feature prominently in the display.

KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY'S OPEN DAY

Just a final reminder about Kogarah Historical Society's Open Day at Carss Cottage on 25 August. Admission to the museum is free and guests can buy Devonshire Teas.

SPRING IN THE GARDENS

The Royal Botanic Gardens will be celebrating 175 years of Garden history from 16 to 22 September. The Gardens, founded in 1816, is the oldest botanic garden and the oldest scientific institution in Australia. Free guided Spring walks with historical themes will depart from the visitors centre at 11am and 1pm daily.

For further information contact Ed Wilson 231 8119.

30TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION



Mrs Jessie Longhurst, Mrs Jean Preddy, Mrs Jean Woods and Mrs Heather McLaren (foreground).

Society Secretary, Mrs Valda Beehag (standing) with Mr Eric Jones, Mrs Mel O'Shea, Mrs Joan Byrne and Dr Joan Hatton



Bernard Sharah, John Curren, Ald Ron Rathbone Ray Mitchell, Mrs Joan Fairhall, Mrs Geeves and Mr Jack Stead

30TH ANNIVERSARY REUNION



From left; Robert McGarn
Mrs Jean Preddy, Mrs
Jessie Longhurst (standing)
and Mrs Ruth Foster.

About to cut the
Anniversary cake...
Mrs Jean Faulkner, Mrs
Stella Ericsson (standing)
Mrs Mendoza, Bernard
Sarah, Mrs Eileen Eardley
(seated).



Mrs Mel O'Shea, Mrs Joan
Byrne, Dr Joan Hatton with
2 guests from Hurstville
Historical Society - Hazel
Blair (President) and Eric Jones.

Lockdale
 Subscriptions Donations Totals
 Receipts £ s d £ s d £ s d

1961

August 18	Ald J. J. McCarthy	1	10	1	12	2	2
	Mrs W. J. Doherty	2					
	Miss J. A. Doherty	3	5	1	5	1	5
	Ald R. J. Scott	3	10			10	
	Mrs A. Christison	4	15			15	
	Mrs J. Savikonen	5	10			10	
	Mrs M. Napper	6	10			10	
	Mr N. C. Guess	7	10			10	
	Miss J. Wheeler	8	10			10	
	Mrs W. Courtney	9	10			10	
	Ald R. W. Rathbone	10	10			10	
	Ald C. W. Naim	11	10			10	
	Mr J. Nightingale	12	10			10	
	Lockdale B.C. - Donation	13	- - -	10		10	
	Lebanon					18	12

Sept 19	Mr J. Linn	14	10			10	
	Mrs B. Hadfield	15	10			10	
	Mr F. Reeves	16	10			10	
	Mrs V. Hillier	17	10			10	
	Mr J. Ellison	18	10			10	
	Mr L. Cardley	19	10			10	
	Mrs J. Head	20	15			15	
						3	15

Nov 29 Deposit 4

Dec 1	Mr E. W. Town	21	10			10	
	Mr E. A. Downs	22	10			10	
	Miss K. Cheetham	23	10			10	
	Mrs J. Ryan	24	15			15	
	Mr W. Foster	25	10			10	
						2	15

May 8 Deposit 2 10

Total carried forward 25 2

GIRLS WITH GRIT

Excerpts from the book of the same name by Jean Scott. Reprinted with kind permission of the author.

Local enthusiasm in Gosford resulted in a cottage and grounds at the Forest nurseries, adjoining Narara Creek, being allocated to the WANS for a training camp. At the beginning of November 1941 about twenty women took up residence, but the supervision was lax, and discontent and disorderly conduct resulted in the matron being replaced by Matte Travers, who tells a remarkable story of leadership and sheer hard work:

I attended the meeting at Sydney Town Hall the night the WANS were formed and offered my services as voluntary cook, to go overseas if called upon. Each Saturday afternoon I went to the training sessions at Burwood Domestic Science School, and in the evenings I worked as a voluntary cook at Air Force House in the city. This was quite an exhausting job, without the benefit of air-conditioning; I was on duty from 5 pm until 10, in my WANS uniform, even having to pay for a cup of coffee if I needed one.

At one of the WANS weekend camps while I was acting as quartermaster, the straw failed to arrive for our palliasses and our canvas cots were quite cold. Using my initiative, I filled an empty biscuit tin with hot water to warm my bed. Little did I know then there would be many more instances where even greater inventiveness would be required.

I had been asked to take charge of the canteen at Concord Military Hospital, but a call from WANS headquarters suggested I might be interested in going to their Land Service camp at Gosford. A rosy picture was painted: I was to be promoted to captain at two pounds ten shillings per week plus keep, a sergeant and two orderlies (who would bring my morning tea and run my bath) would help me with various duties about the camp. It sounded quite agreeable to me, so I resigned from my place of business, packed, caught the train for Gosford and then took a taxi to the Forest Nurseries Camp, arriving at 4 pm. As I stepped from the cab I noticed a group of girls in khaki overalls standing by the gate and I smiled at them. I heard one say, "She's not much more than a kid!". Then Mrs Beveridge and other members of HQ staff came and hurried me inside. Apparently, the person who had been supervising had proved unsatisfactory, allowing the girls to do as they liked, and she had been dismissed. The girls in turn had thrown their badges on the table, spat on them and declared that they'd "take no orders from any bloody officer!". The group at the gate had intended to pelt me with rotten tomatoes and throw me in the creek.

The official party left for Gosford, leaving the sergeant and myself to deal with the girls, who were still outside. Slowly, one by one, they knocked at the door and I spoke to each in turn, telling them I would accept them if they would obey my orders; most were crying and I was feeling quite exhausted. By 10 o'clock all but two, who were rather undesirable anyway, had returned to

the fold. I then made a quick inspection of the long, dark and narrow kitchen and was horrified to find, in the pantry, bags of rice moving with weevils, and pounds of cheese creeping with maggots, more of which were beneath the sink top. In the laundry, 40 sets of government-issue bed linen was waiting to be washed in a wood-fire copper, and every window was filthy and uncurtained. I told the sergeant we would begin work at four the next morning.

Those who had jobs to go to left after a scratch breakfast; the others I set to work helping to clean up while I got busy with the washing. Halfway through all this, Mrs Beveridge rang to ask me to meet her in Gosford to be introduced to the local tradesmen, and after a hectic morning the HQ officials left for Sydney. With them went Amy Pickering, who was to have opened a camp in Wamberal but owing to lack of work in the district was reallocated, and so I was minus my sergeant. Very dispirited, I returned to the cottage, which was set in lovely surroundings with gardenias in bloom and a beautiful fernery - such a contrast to the interior I was about to face.

I told the girls the camp was to be in order by 13 December for the official opening, and I said I would be working as hard as everyone else to bring our quarters to livable conditions. They pulled their weight when they saw I was as good as my word. The whole place was in a disgusting state, each area revealing filth that took hours of scrubbing to clean. I found some yards of net in a cupboard and with the aid of an old treadle sewing machine made curtains; a length of damask became a tablecloth. Two of the girls and myself varnished the floor and some old jars filled with gardenias gave the room a much more pleasant aroma. We were determined to make a good impression on the opening day. The girls carvassed donations from the local folk, set up and decorated stalls and practised marching each morning before breakfast. Through our combined effort, all was in readiness and we had all become very good friends.

Mr Clive Evatt officiated at the unveiling and I marched at the head of the girls to the platform. Many of the local people came along and the staff from headquarters were most surprised when they saw the changes we had achieved in such a short time. Later I heard from HQ that the girls had written a letter expressing their appreciation of me, as they had expected an old, tough, army-type officer who would boss them about. This lifted my spirits indeed, for my earlier pretty picture had most certainly faded by now.

In the following week I spent some time trying to find work for the girls as they were all fairly broke; it was not possible to keep anyone to act as orderly, so I continued to cook and clean alone. A number of chickens were running loose on the property with many roosters among them, so we made an effort to sell some, unfortunately without much success. The next best thing was to use them ourselves and so chicken became a regular part of our diet, thanks to an Aborigine girl who was an expert with an axe.

At Christmas most of the girls went home, leaving only six or seven for our festive dinner of the usual poultry; however, I made a pudding and a cake for the occasion. During this period I was given permission for the kitchen to be enlarged, with windows the full length of it and benches for preparing meals and cutting lunches. Card tables were ordered which gave us a more homelike appearance, and in the New Year I planned to train an orderly to assist me. This was not without incident, as I recall. One day the butcher had delivered two large meat orders and left them on the bench. I asked the orderly to prepare the vegetables, wrapping the peelings in newspaper before placing them in the incinerator. Later, unable to find the parcels of meat, I asked if she had moved them; she made a dash for the door - she had thought they were also rubbish! To our even greater consternation we found she had mistaken the bin of liquid manure for the incinerator; we quickly dragged the meat parcels out. Thank goodness the wrappings were quite thick and the liquid had not penetrated, but I was very distressed and angry so I set her to washing all the meat thoroughly. I also left her to make the evening meal as I just couldn't face dinner that night, and went into town.

During the last weeks of January I received a phone call from HQ informing me that they were opening camps at Batlow, Leeton and Griffith and needed my help. I asked for a wage increase, and to return to Gosford, and also to be allowed to recruit some of the girls I had come to know. They agreed to all my demands, their manner implying I was their No. 1 officer, so I arranged for ten of the girls to follow and I left for Sydney. It was hard to leave the others behind after all the things we had been through together.

We continue the story in Batlow.....

Autumn was approaching when I received a telegram from HQ to inform me of the arrival of a further 32 girls on the following Monday. I was to buy stores and equipment from Batlow's two shops and take over the new RSL building (not yet finished), which would be my headquarters as Central Camp, while the new matron would move into Atkinson's. The next day Mr MacKenzie called for me and a few of the girls and drove us to the scouts hall in the township. This old hall was donated to the Land Army for as long as they required it, to be used as a messroom in conjunction with the RSL. These two buildings were in different streets, and about 150 yards apart; this I knew would present an additional problem for staff and girls going to the early-morning breakfasts, especially in the winter months ahead.

The only furniture was a few long trestle tables and low forms previously used by kindergarden children. We nailed wooden blocks to the latter to raise them; everything else we swept, dusted and scrubbed. Once more there was just one small fuel stove, so I placed iron bars on bricks in the large open fireplace where

dixies could be set, and outside I had a trench dug as a firepit with more bars across the top. It was primitive but functional. The night before the new recruits arrived, I cooked a large piece of corned beef to have cold with salad, and in the morning I made a dixie of custard into which I cut bananas, as a dessert. At midday I met the group and escorted them to the scouts hall for lunch and then to their quarters, leaving them to unpack while I took Miss Ashdown to Atkinson's camp and introduced her to the girls quartered there. On returning to my room in the unlined building I overheard the girls discussing their accommodation; they all appeared to be of a mind to stay only as long as it took to make the money for their fare home. I felt distressed for them, as it was certainly a pathetic place for anyone, but there were orchardists waiting to speak to me about the distribution of the girls and I was kept too busy to try and give them any comforting words. The straw for our palliasses was not delivered until late so it was quite dark and cold by the time we got to bed; that too was a restless night for everyone as the wandering cows tramped around our unfenced yard, eating the straw left lying there.

The bathroom had one old bath, at least a hundred years old, a chip heater and two enamel wash bowls. On the way home from work the girls gathered bark and chips to feed the heater; the first in had clean water, then more chips and water were added as those following bathed. I bought a large bowl and washed in my room as best as I could, for I could not face getting into that old galvanised tub. Another of our problems was the condensation which gathered on the unlined roof and dripped onto the beds. If it rained, raincoats and umbrellas were used in the dormitory in an effort to keep clothes as well as beds dry.

One lonely girl was about to celebrate her 21st birthday and with the help of the other girls we arranged a surprise party for her. I hired a radio, made sausage rolls, sandwiches and cakes; we set the tables in the dormitory where everyone had a happy evening, drinking her health in cordials. The next day Esther presented me with a box of Winning Post chocolates; she told me that her early life had been quite unhappy, but the friendliness of the girls and my understanding way had helped her a great deal. My room was large with a big fireplace, so on wintry nights I would make a dixie of coccoa and invite "my brood" to join me for supper. They'd bring rugs and pillows and sit about the floor singing and telling stories until lights-out. We were asked to join the Anzac Day services with the townspeople, so I trained the girls to march and made a wreath. We assembled at the Institute Hall on 25 April and marched to the memorial gates. I felt we made a favourable impression, considering the small amount of time we could devote to drill, and the fact most of the girls, weary after their day's work in the orchards, were ready to relax rather than practise marching.

With the demand for more girls in the district, another camp was to be opened on Bert Herring's property, "Wybalena", so I went out

to make an inspection. I was appalled at what I saw: an old hay shed with horses still housed there, smelling of sweat and manure, the sleeping area in a loft with broken windows and evidence of rat infestation. I protested at the conditions, but my superior officers from HQ thought otherwise, so I ordered the carpenters to make cupboards and flyproof safes. The girls, with Mrs Whistler, moved in and the next day I went out to see how they had fared. Paper and hessian pieces were stuffed in the broken windows and cracks; rats had already chewed their clothing and they were terrified. Mrs Whistler had moved her bed outside! I was disgusted, unable to believe anyone could pass this building as fit for human habitation. The girls were brave to withstand such treatment and to continue doing such a wonderful service for the country.

The next advice from HQ instructed me to prepare the camps for a visit and inspection by the governor, Lord Wakehurst, his wife and party. Mrs Lynch arrived the day before to make sure all was ready, bowls of flowers were placed on the tables in the dormitory and I was told on no account to allow the official party to see the loft at Wybalena. The inspection proceeded quite well as we toured Central, Atkinson's and the packing house, where Lord and Lady Wakehurst met and spoke to a number of the girls, showing a great deal of interest in everything, but at Wybalena Lady Wakehurst insisted on seeing where the girls slept. When she descended the ladder she said nothing, but the expression on her face spoke volumes. Later she took me aside and said, "No doubt the flowers around the place are for our benefit". I told her that this was so but also about our fireside singsong gatherings and she seemed pleased to hear of this and was especially kind to me for the rest of the tour.

Afternoon tea had been prepared by the ladies of the Red Cross and Mrs Lynch said I could be excused from attending anything further, but H.V. Smith insisted, "Oh we must have Captain Travers with us at the official table". Finally the visitors were farewelled from the hotel and "H.V" offered to call for me that evening to escort me to the dance being held at the Institute Hall. This appeared to make Mrs Lynch very cross - no doubt she had been expecting she would be his partner. However, if the Land Army was to be accepted in the district where I was to be the senior officer-in-charge, it was important for me to meet as many of the townspeople as possible for the girls' benefit.

Matte Dodds (nee Travers) New South Wales

ST GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

INCOME

Balance in Bank at 14.1.91	1984.40
Members subscriptions	45.00
Donations	61.20
Sale of society books	150.00
Bus trip.. Ryde	350.00
Coach trip.. Carcoar	2970.00
Bank Interest	66.91
	<u>\$5627.51</u>

Expenditure

Postage	197.68
Gift for Speaker	8.93
National Trust subscription	50.00
Wreath - Mrs Stahl	30.00
R.A.H.S. Public Liability	135.00
30th Birthday Cake	49.50
Donation to St Peters Restoration	50.00
Carcoar Coach Trip - deposit	2520.00
Carcoar expenses to Mrs J Fairhall	430.00
Ryde bus tour & Group Entrance	350.00
Outstanding Cheque 430378- presented	37.48
F.I.D. \$1-83 F.D.T. \$ 3.35	5.18
Balance in bank 28th June 1991	<u>1813.74</u>
	<u>\$5677.51</u>

Ryde Bus trip	756.00
Deposit	350.00
Expenses	406.00
	<u>\$756.00</u>

\$756.00 \$756.00

Carcoar Coach Trip	3680.00
Deposit	2970.00
Expenses	430.00
profit	280.00
banked Jul	<u>\$3680.00</u>
	<u>\$ 3680.00</u>

I have examined the books, bank statements, vouchers and cheque butts presented by Mrs Persenäs Treasurer of the above society and in my opinion this represents a true statement of its financial affairs as at 30th June 1991.

L. Thompson

Auditor 9th August 1991