

SPONSORED BY
ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

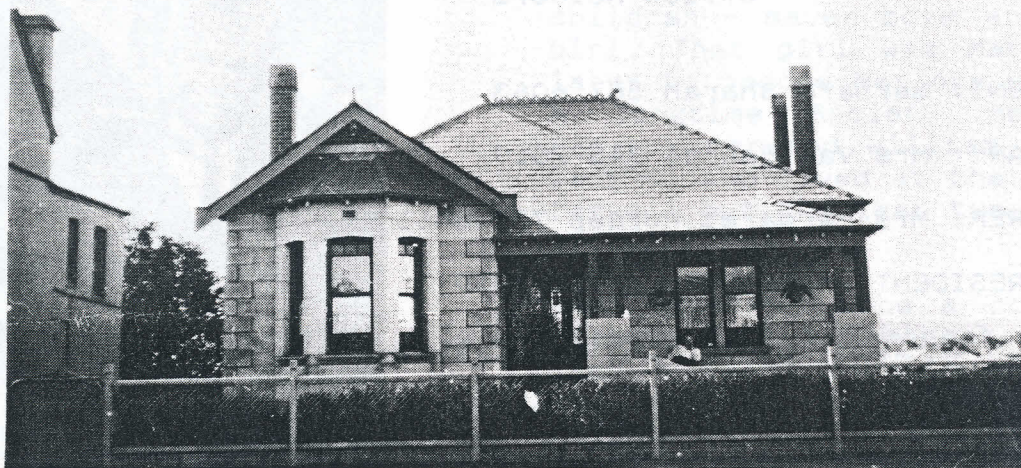


ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

Registered by Aust.Post
NBH-0335

7 Lynwood St
Blakehurst

NOVEMBER 1991



WILDMAN'S HOUSE - STONEY CREEK RD

Built by James Wildman about 1892 this stone cottage stands at 21 Stoney Creek Road Bexley. It was the home of longtime member of the St George Historical Society, Mrs Marjorie Piper, who passed away in June of this year. We would be interested to know if members have any information relating to Mr Wildman or the house itself. The photo above shows the house as it was about sixty years ago. See story inside.

NEXT MEETING

ORAL HISTORY

An excellent way of bringing history to life is the recording of oral history. Rosemary Block, Oral History Project Officer at the Mitchell Library, will tell you how to go about it and give a few tips on the pitfalls to avoid.

DATE: Friday, 8pm, 15 November

LOCATION: 1st Floor, Council Chambers, Rockdale Town Hall
Princes Highway, Rockdale.

SUPPER ROSTER: Members please bring a plate.

Office Holders

PRESIDENT: Bernard Sharah 567 6063

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 567 6063

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

JAMES WILDMAN - STONEMASON

The charming stone house which stands at 26 Stoney Creek Road, next to the Bexley RSL, will be 100 years old next year. It was built by English stone mason, James Wildman, who was responsible for quite a number of notable buildings at Gulgong, NSW. Wildman was born in Yorkshire in 1856. After arriving in Australia he married Mary MacIntosh on 21st July 1888 at Glebe. That same year he purchased land at Stoney Creek Road but resided at Wells Street, Redfern. First a timber building was erected, but judging by Sands Directory, somewhere between 1892 and 1893 a two-roomed stone house was built. The present house is much larger so we can reasonably assume that the house was only in its initial stage when this was recorded.

We do not know what buildings James Wildman built in the St George District but we do know that he later went to Gulgong in search of work. Whilst at Gulgong (the town on the ten dollar note) he built the memorial bandstand in Anzac Park, the Church of England rectory, the main hall of the Royal Picture Palace, and the building now used as the town's museum as well as numerous other buildings in the vicinity of Gulgong.



James Wildman

James Wildman died on 24 August 1918 at the age of 62. The Wildmans' had eight children - seven boys and one girl. That girl was Marjory, later to become Marjory Piper, a longtime Society member. Marjory married William Piper in 1944 and lived at the house for all but the last two years of her life.

What appears to be a compact cottage from the street is in fact a large rambling house. The facade is of dressed sandstone and features an attractive bay window. A side view reveals that the house is in fact two-storied by virtue of the land sloping away from the main road.

At the rear is an attractive garden dominated by a mature Phoenix palm. Amongst things Wildman must have been interested in gardening as old photos show a bush-house and many exotic plantings still survive.

In the back garden is the original horse-trough that was formerly located on the corner of King George's Road and Connell's Point Road, South Hurstville. It is the property of the Society and has been kept in Marjorie Piper's backyard for many years for safe keeping.

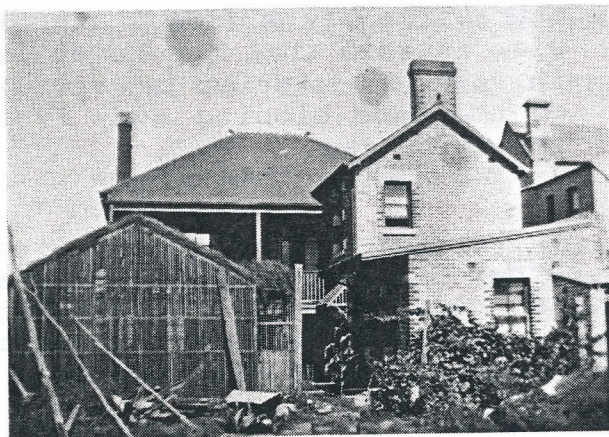


Entrance Hall c. 1917

Interestingly enough, amongst the old photos mentioned are a few attempts at recording the interior of the house. There are photos of the main entrance hall and other rooms which have obviously been done by time-lapse. The results are not marvellous but give some indication of how the house looked sixty or so years ago.

Another photograph shows cattle ambling down Stoney Creek Road a sight hard to image now in an area usually congested with heavy vehicle traffic.

The front entrance retains its beautiful leadlight panelling but many of the original features have been removed particularly internally. The chimneys and all but one fireplace have long since disappeared. Nevertheless the house lends much character to an area otherwise devoid of that particular quality. The house will probably be put up for sale shortly and it would be sad if this piece of old Bexley was destroyed.



Rear of house 60 to 70 years ago.

REMINISCENCES OF PIONEERS

An excerpt from *The Jubilee History of the Municipality of Hurstville 1887-1937*

Historians can dig in the past and reconstruct the life and conditions of the early days from the materials they excavate, but after all, their story is written from the outside. Pioneers can speak from the inside, that is, they are themselves, part of that past. It is right and proper, therefore, that a chapter of this book should be allotted to some of the pioneers of Hurstville, so that they may tell us something of the days when they and the district were young.

First we have Mr F.G. Gates, of Apsley Street, Penshurst, who was born in 1863, and came to Penshurst when he was ten years of age. Mr Gates speaks:-

"In my young days there were only two roads connecting with Sydney, that is, Forest Road and Rocky Point Road. Stoney Creek Road and the Wollongong Road linked themselves to the Forest Road. These highways were very rough.

As one proceeded along the Stoney Creek Road there was much unfenced land to be seen. There were two beautiful homes on the Wollongong Road, owned by Mr A. and Mr T. Milsop. After passing these homes you came to the corner of Forest Road and Stoney Creek Road, where a fine house of two-storeys had been erected by Mr C. Kinsela. The grounds round this house were a picture to gaze on with their wattle and gum trees, lawns and shrubberies and kangaroos and wallabies running about.

Near the present Baptist Church were some lovely vineyards, carefully tended, the grapes from these were used for making different wines. Amongst the owners I remember Messrs Bayman, Smithson, Stephen and Evans. Mr C. Howard at that time dealt in charcoal and many of the settlers used to earn their living by burning huge logs and stumps of trees for charcoal.

One resident named McFarlane, who lived near the corner of Croydon Road, was a wood carter. Climbing the hill we came to a weatherboard dwelling owned by Mrs S. Bown, one of whose sons was an alderman of Hurstville. We now come to six of the best orchards that eyes could gaze on, especially in the apple season. You could see limbs bending under the weight, also of peaches, pears and oranges. Mr Bown, the father, and his two sons owned orchards, then there was Mr Dent, who had a large orchard, and Mr J. Baker, a small one. These pioneers owned the land on the corner of Stoney Creek Road and Belmore Road.

When I was a boy I noticed a large lamp, projecting out from a building, bearing the sign "Little John and Robin Hood". Being inquisitive, I asked what this meant and was told it was an inn.

All the settlers in those days had to take their products to Paddy's Market in Sydney. At first they used a heavy dray and you could hear it groaning along from a long way off. It took nearly three hours to get to the market in these carts. Then the spring-van came in and that shortened the journey.

Now we will take a glance at Forest Road. From Kinsel Grove you came to Mr Preddy's property, near the Bexley Oval. On the right hand side of the road from Sydney was a very large estate opposite to what is known now as Willison. Just off the road was a narrow strip of land, about six chains, and that was the only opening to Kogarah. It was thought advisable to link Kogarah with Gannon's Forest and a road was surveyed and named after a German settler, but after the outbreak of war the name was changed and given that of a gallant boy who was one of the first to fall at Gallipoli. The only exit out from Stoney Creek Road was Belmore Road, and I, as lad, had to trespass on the large estates to get groceries from Mrs Lovely near the old Blue Post hotel. These lands were forests of huge trees towering to a great height.

At Croydon Road there was a number of settlers. Mr Edwards had a big nursery, Mr Doniney, a piggery, and Mr Lardner, a large vineyard. Mr Hodges, a butcher, told me that in the forties a large number of men were employed in the district squaring huge girders of iron-bark. These girders were hauled to Sydney by bullock-jinkers to be shipped to England.

The property we knew as Judd's Meadows, comprising 680 acres, was owned at one time by Mr Struthers, and was bought by Mr Thomas Walker, whose daughter is Dame Edith Walker. In my boyhood days there used to be a slab-house, owned at one time by Captain Canary. The old hands said the slabs were split in 1830. On the opposite side from the Meadows there were two large estates, one owned by Mr Peter Moore, of Kogarah.

When the railway was being laid many of the huge iron-bark trees on Mr Dent's land were felled to make sleepers. I was one of those who bought a ticket for the first train to run from Hurstville to Sydney. We caught the next train back so as not to miss the fun, and a good day we had what with games and a banquet at night.

Hurstville has progressed wonderfully, and I predict that before many years have passed this Hustville town will be designated as a great city and that this great municipality advancing year by year will in time be second to none in the State of New South Wales."

Next we have Mr W.P. Judd:

"I have been in the St George District," said Mr Judd, "for about fifty-four years. My father, William George Judd, was the first managing director of Hurstville brick-works at Mortdale. He represented the district of Caterbury in the Legislative Assenbly from 1885 to 1887. The brick-works were started about 1884. Electioneering in those days was a very strenuous affair. One meeting might be held in Marrickville, and the next at Salt Pan, and the candidate and his supporters had to ride horseback from one meeting to the other. We lived in Arncliffe when I was a young man, and I used to ride daily to the brick-works. I remember very well the thousands of birds I used to see and many a gill-bird and parrot I have shot on the way to work. Birds were particularly numerous at Penshurst, probably on account of the number of turpentine trees there.

I remember also the magnificent timber growing in Hurstville in those days. Dent Bros. used to send large quantities of timber to New Zealand for wharfage purposes. Some of the charcoal burners were still operation, the charcoal being used principally by blacksmiths. One story of the charcoal burners comes to my mind. An old man - an ex-convict - and his wife made a living by charcoal burning. They both drank freely and when drunk used to quarrel fiercely. One night during one of these quarrels the woman took the man and threw him on the fire. He was too drunk to get out of the fire, and there he stayed. The next day Jack Pearce happened to ride by their hut. He saw a pair of boots sticking out of the fire and went to investigate. All that was left of the unfortunate husband was his two legs with the boots on the feet. Pearce hung the legs up in a black-butt tree, and there they remained for a number of years.

My father bought Oatley's grants and adjoining lands and this estate become known as "Judd's Meadows". We lived in Oatley's old home. At one time we constructed a straight mile of a race course near the present Dumbleton (Beverley Hills) railway station. Jimmy Gardiner, a horse trainer, rode a wild black horse there one day. The horse ran away with him and dashed into a tree. Gardiner woke up three weeks later.

In addition to horse-riding we had cock-fighting and many mains were fought there. I have seen as many as seventy vehicles parked there which had brought onlookers to the fights.

When I was the owner of the Meadows I once tried closer settlement on the estate. I had five farms irrigated, city water was used. I let the farms and the first family to settle were Spaniards. They grew tomatoes principally and were very successful. Another of my tenants used to electrify the ground. He was successful also. Later on I tried sheep-farming on the estate, but the weather spoilt that and I lost money on the venture.

In the days of which I am speaking there was no medical man in Hurstville, and meat and bread only came twice a week from St. Peters.

The first medical man in Hurstville was Dr Swain, and he was followed by Dr James Macleod, who was one of the first to use a motor car.

Robert Millikin, 'Old Bob,' as he was called, was the first cabman to ply in Hurstville. Afterwards he acquired a taxi-cab, a quaint old car, and only recently he retired from the ranks.

At Kingsgrove none of the houses were even locked up. Any money in the house was usually placed in a vase on the mantelpiece. Once a sailor came into the district and like every one else was trusted. One day, however, he stole the money in one of the vases, and was caught by some of the women who took the sailor and tarred and feathered him.

When John Sproule was mayor he used to ride a black blood horse which was ridden from Bathurst to Sydney in record time.

Speaking of the brick-works, bricks made there were used in the foundations of the Queen Victoria Building, the Equitable Building and the New York Life Building. Very few bricks were used locally, nearly all the houses were of wood.

In St George Church of England cemetery a soldier who had fought at Waterloo was buried, and Mr Blackshaw had his tombstone renovated. Another war veteran in the district was a man named Addis, who fought in the Crimea. He constructed a channel in the bed of Picnic Creek to Oatley Bay so that he could bring his boats up. The channel was a favourite bathing place for boys and was known as Addis Channel.

Along Forest Road, from Station Lane to about the White Horse Hotel, thirty years ago, was a paddock known as Humphrey's paddock. A creek ran through it and there was a rail-fence along the most unpromising bit of building land in Hurstville, and when the whole paddock was offered to me for 2,800 pounds I did not take much time in declining the offer. In 1911, however, when Mr Blackshaw was Mayor, he set about getting the land drained and improved and recently some of the land has been sold for over 500 pounds per foot."

SOCIETY NEWS

NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to new members, Mrs Bettye Ross and Mrs Val Garner. Both ladies bring with them considerable experience and interest in history. Bettye has written three family histories - *A Pioneer Family* (about her ancestors Charles and Sarah Munro), a book on a Northumberland coal mining family, Robert and Ellen Edgar and *Walking with the Waltons of Durham* about Thomas and Elizabeth Walton. Val is also very interested in family history and has written *Tartan to Wattle*, about Richard and Sarah Boyd.

MRS RAYMENT AND MR ALAN PARRY

The Society sadly notes the passing of two members in the last month. Alan Parry was brought up in Arncliffe and had a keen interest in its history. The Parry family home was on the corner of Wollongong Road and Broe Avenue. Parry Lane at the rear of the house was named after the family. A meticulous record keeper and stickler for detail Alan could always be relied upon to come up with the right information. For a great many years he was very actively involved in the management of Arncliffe Scots. Alan was well known for his generosity and good heartedness. His funeral was held at St David's, Arncliffe and quite appropriately the church was filled to capacity. Mrs Ada Rayment (nee Nelson) passed away on 12 October at the age of 84. Earlier this year Mrs Rayment wrote a letter about her early life and this was published in the June bulletin. The letter had charm, warmth and a touch of pathos. In that respect it said a lot about its writer. She was born and raised in Arncliffe and Banksia. Her father, Thomas Nelson, worked as a stonemason and some of his work can be seen in the stone wall around Arncliffe Park. Her family attended the Banksia Free Church. Before writing to us she had a long conversation with our secretary, Val Beehag. Val was touched by the lady's gentleness and sincerity.

RAHS CONFERENCE

The Royal Australian Historical Society's Annual Conference was held at Tocal, Paterson, near Maitland on 12th and 13th October. The theme of the conference was *Regional Identity: Myth or Reality*. Two delegates, Bernard Sharah and Arthur Ellis, attended to represent the Society. The topics and speakers were both relevant and stimulating. One issue raised in the business session of the conference concerned the future role of RAHS Liaison Officer. The position of the Liaison Officer is to provide vital expertise and assistance to affiliated societies such as our own. This role has been performed very proficiently by the present Liaison Officer, Mari Metzke. However, the future of the position may be in doubt due to reduced funding by the State Government. We will keep you informed of developments.

IF YOU ARE NOT ALREADY A MEMBER-

WOULD YOU LIKE TO JOIN OUR SOCIETY?

We are a group of people interested in local history and where possible we would like to see the preservation of historical records, sites and buildings.

We have outings to places of historic interest and have other activities such as history walks and day trips to heighten public interest in our heritage.

From February 1992, our meetings are held on the 2nd Tuesday of the month at 1st floor Rockdale Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale at 8pm.

Our society assists in the running of "Lydham Hall", our historic house-museum located at Lydham Avenue, Rockdale and we have a monthly bulletin to keep members informed of current activities.

If you like to join please complete the following and forward with cheque for \$7 (individual) or \$10 (house hold) to 7 Lynwood Street Blakehurst 2221.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

NAME:

ADDRESS:

TEL.NO:

Please find enclosed cheque/money order for \$_____.