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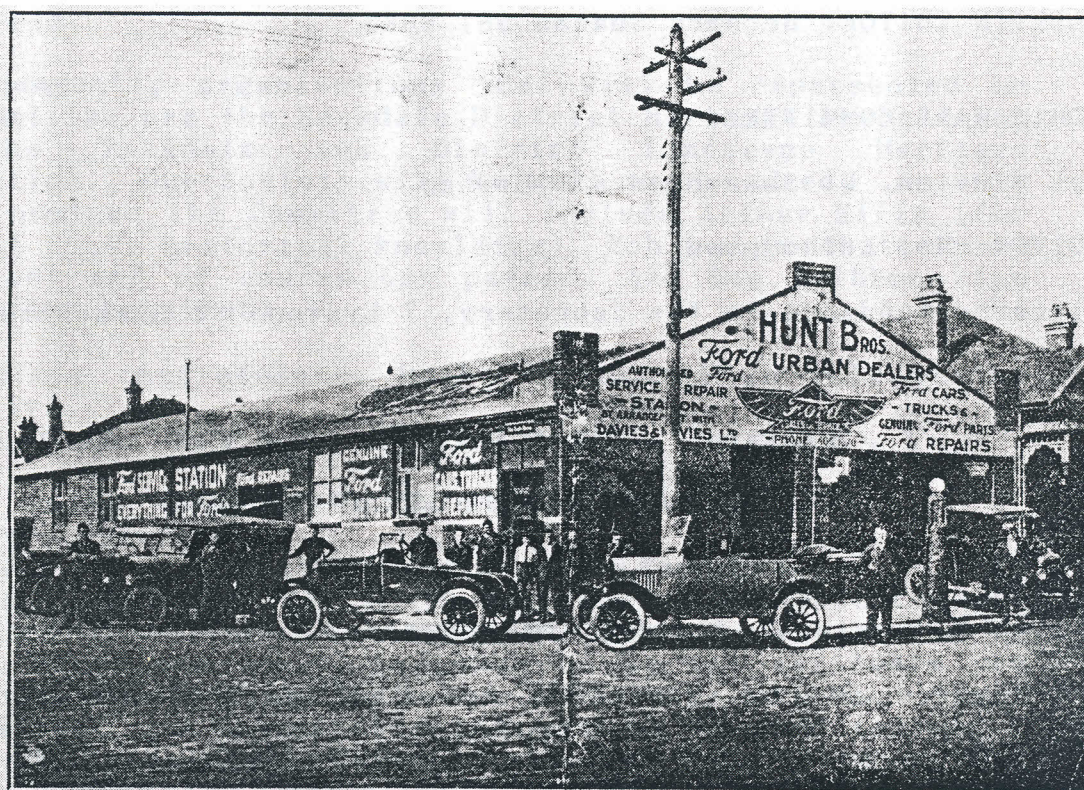
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ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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FORD SALES AND SERVICE.

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HUNT BROS., FORD URBAN DEALERS, 248 RAILWAY PARADE, KOGARAH.

WE'RE HUNTING FOR PHOTOS!

This is a 1925 photograph of one of the St George District's most well-known businesses. Perhaps you have an old photo which is of local interest? By allowing us to copy your original photograph you would assist in expanding the Society's small but growing collection. Enquiries: Bernard Sharah 567 6063 After hours.

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PROMOTIONS OFFICER: Mrs Joan Byrne 567 8641

BULLETIN EDITOR: Bernard Sharah 567 6063

LYDHAM HALL COMMITTEE:

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

AUDITOR: Mrs L Thompson

All correspondence to the Secretary, 7 Lynwood St Blakehurst 2221

7.30pm TUESDAY 14TH APRIL

COUNCIL CHAMBERS, ROCKDALE TOWN HALL

Special General Meeting

INCORPORATION

Members will be receiving copies of the draft constitution. A Special General Meeting has been called by the committee for discussion and ratification of the proposal. To allow adequate time the meeting is scheduled to commence at 7.30pm.

"RESTORING STONWORK"

Local stonemason, Mr Gordon Smith, is to be guest speaker at our next meeting. Mr Smith is a man of vast experience in this field and he has a project in mind which is sure to arouse the interest of our members - restoration of headstones of Bay St Uniting Church Rockdale. It is a project in which Mr Smith is seeking the involvement of our Society. He has also offered to restore the horse trough which was moved from the late Mrs Piper's house at Bexley.

HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

This is the best news in a long time for those of us who value our historical and architectural heritage

Rockdale Council is to establish a Heritage Advisory Committee to examine the findings of the recently completed Rockdale Heritage Study, conducted by consultants Meredith Walker and Terry Cass. Rockdale Council has invited the St George Historical Society to nominate a representative to be a member of the Heritage Advisory Committee. It means for the first time the Society will have a say in what buildings or sites should be preserved for their historic or architectural significance.

The Committee will evaluate the merits of items included in the Study and will be able to nominate items not already identified.

Other community organisations that will be represented on the Committee are the Rockdale District Heritage Association and the Rockdale and District Landscape Heritage Association. Our Society will be well represented. As well as our nominee the Committee will include Arthur Ellis (for his vast local historical knowledge), Bob Lee (architectural expertise) and of course our patron, Ald Ron Rathbone (no explanation required).

The Society congratulates Rockdale Council on this worthy initiative.

THANK YOU, ROBERT COLLINS!

It's very easy to take some things for granted. This bulletin is printed each month courtesy of Rockdale Council - and Robert Collins. Robert is the Council Printer and he does an excellent job. So, when he is not available you really appreciate his fast and efficient service. Last month Robert was hospitalised for over a week and as a result only essential Council material was printed. Our Society, along with many other community organisations, had to find other means of producing their newsletters. It cost us \$135 to have the Bulletin printed and that was a fairly competitive price. So thank you to Robert Collins and Rockdale Council for the service they regularly provide.

HUGE WAITING LIST TO ASSIST AT LYDHAM HALL

That's what we would like to report but unfortunately the situation is quite the opposite. Some volunteers to assist at Lydham Hall would be very much appreciated especially the weekend 2nd and 3rd May in Heritage Week. Our involvement in Lydham Hall is essential.

WHEN ANGUS MET ROBERTSON

An excerpt from "Streets of Old Sydney" Alan Sharpe 1987.

If publishing is (or was) a "Gentleman's Profession" then bookselling is surely the Gentle Profession and one of its most gentle men was David Angus who started selling books in a tiny store in Market Street in June 1884 and lent his name to the oldest established booksellers in Sydney.

There was a strong Scottish influence in Sydney's early bookshop history. Angus and the two Robertsons were Scots and even William Dymocks parents were Scottish although he was born in Chippendale. The George Robertsons not only shared the same name and the same heritage they were both the sons of ministers, both were trained booksellers, both wore beards and both died in their 73rd year. They never met, probably because one George Robertson lived in Melbourne and the other lived in Sydney.

The Melbourne Robertson, the senior of the two, opened a Sydney branch at 361 George Street, one shop north of King Street. One day in 1882 a 21 year old Scotsman who arrived from New Zealand the previous day, entered the shop looking for a job. His book selling experience was favourable but when he gave his name the manager shook his head: they couldn't have another person named George Robertson working in the shop, it would be too confusing. He got the job anyway which was just as well because he had spent his last ten shillings on a night's lodging. Robertson remained in the job for four years during which time he worked alongside a fellow-Scot with a pointed beard named David Angus.

David Angus was 29 when he opened his 20 feet by 10 feet bookshop at 110 1/2 Market Street which, according to A.B. "Banjo" Paterson "resembled one of those cubicles in any eastern bazaar". It was here that a latter-day Sydney bookseller, Jim Tyrrell, obtained his first job at the age of 12.

It had been a brave move on Angus's part as he suffered from continuous poor health and as a consumptive had been advised to leave his native Edinburgh where he was employed as a bookshop assistant in Princes Street. He quickly outgrew his hole-in-the-wall Market Street shop and moved to large premises at number 112. Ill-health forced him to leave the humidity of Sydney for the dry inland air of Mudgee and he placed the shop in the hands of a manager. He returned to Sydney when he found the business was going downhill. Realising he needed a partner who would take a personal interest in the business he invited the black-bearded George Robertson to join him. Robertson bought into the business for 15 pounds.

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In 1890, the start of that rich decade in Australian literature, Angus and Robertson moved into a barn-like building at number 89 Castlereagh Street. It was formerly O'Brien's coach building works and the ground floor was below street level. It was some years before renovations were fully completed. Angus and Robertson's bookshop was to remain there for 81 years.

According to Jim Tyrrell's autobiography, *Old Books, Old Friends, Old Sydney*, the two partners, although exact opposites, were ideally suited. Angus's outlook was conditioned by his ill-health; Robertson shaped his own destiny. Although they shared a Scottish heritage and a love of books Robertson was a robust, outgoing personality compared to the frail Angus. Angus's heart was in Scotland while Robertson readily adapted to the Australian outlook. When the partners began publishing books half way through the 'nineties David Angus was full of doubt, it was Robertson who pushed that side of the business for, according to Tyrrell, he had "the physique and the energy to make light of a publisher's burdens, enough of the visionary in him to see success ahead and enough of the dictator to stride over obstacles or opposition".

In April 1895 Banjo Paterson asked Angus and Robertson whether they would publish a collection of his poems, Robertson decided to take the gamble and *The Man From Snowy River* appeared in print. It was an immediate success. Encouraged by this Henry Lawson handed over his prose manuscript of *In the Days When the World Was Wide* closely followed by *When the Billy Boils*. The success of these titles was evidence that Australians wanted to read about their country and its background. The huge sales of C.J. Dennis's *The Songs of the Sentimental Bloke* proved the point. In 1896 the partners launched the Sydney Book Club library from which the uniformly red-covered books could be obtained for a membership fee of two guineas a year. Most of the members were from rural areas. The book club ceased operation in 1958 two years after the advent of television.

Sadly David Angus was unable to share for long in the firm's successes. Illness forced his retirement at the end of 1900 and he returned to England for a visit but the weather proved too much for him and he died in Bournemouth in February 1901.

Two members of the staff, Frederick Wymark and Richard Thomson took up Angus's share until 1907 when Angus and Robertson became a public company. In the 1920's the company published Norman Lindsay and ambitious works such as C.E.W. Bean's *Official History of Australia in the War of 1914-18* and the handsome two volume green bound *Australian Encyclopaedia*. The company acquired a printery and changed the name to Halstead Press, after George Robertson's

birthplace. When "G.R.", as he was fondly called died in 1933 his obituary claimed he was "the best friend Australian literature ever had". Sometimes dour he was always kind and generous and his loss was felt deeply in the literary world.

From 1960 onward the company expanded rapidly and there was a bewildering exchange of shares and ownership.

The company lost something of its literary personality when it lost a number of its long time employees in the early 1970's. In recent years the name has been franchised to booksellers around the country and the company has established overseas interests. Australian titles continue to be published each year. In 1986 Angus and Robertson celebrated its hundredth birthday. No doubt the ghosts of the founders were present, scratching their heads in wonderment but grateful their names continue to have an important influence on Australia's book world.

SOCIETY NEWS

MRS E. LUNNEY

Last month one of our oldest and long term members passed away. Mrs Lunney and her late husband joined the Society in 1962 and took a keen interest in local history. Mrs Lunney had a particular interest as she was a descendant of Rockdale pioneer, Konrad Franck (see Early Settlers of the St George District Vol 1.). Amongst Konrad Franck's extensive landholdings was the site of the present Rockdale Town Hall. Mr and Mrs Lunney were a charming couple and made a valuable contribution to the Society in the early days. They were regular attendees until Mr Lunney took ill and passed away many years ago. Although Mrs Lunney was in her nineties she loved to receive her copy of the bulletin each month and it was important for her that the envelope bore the inscription - "Mrs E. Lunney, Life Member". She took great pride in being a life member of this Society

GET WELL!

A get-well wish from the members to Margaret Taylor and Jack Wood who have both been struck with a dreaded flu virus for five weeks now.

SISTER STANLEY

Last month's article on Sister Stanley drew a welcome response from member, Mrs Sheila Tearle. Mrs Tearle was at Sydney University in 1925 when Sister Stanley was in her honours year.