ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN INC.

THE TOWERS

Here is a rare photograph (possibly the only one) of *The Towers* as it was at the turn of the century. *The Towers* at Forest Road, Arncliffe has been saved from possible demolition by local heritage legislation and the good work of Rockdale Council. In an appalling state of neglect less than six months ago the house is being restored by the new owner. Part of the compromise plan that retains the house will allow subdivision of the Forest Road frontage for residential development. We hope to bring you some historical details on the house and its former owners, the Esdaile family, in the near future. Photo courtesy of Mrs E. Watts.

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All correspondence to the Secretary, 7 Lynwood St Blakehurst 2221

SOCIETY NEWS

Good to see our Vice-president, Noel Beehag, back on deck at our last society meeting. However, Mrs Nancy Lee, wife of past president, Bob Lee, is not well and the society sends its best wishes for a speedy recovery.

A warm welcome to new member, Mrs Helen Rasco. Helen is the daughter of the late Mrs E. Lunney a life member of the society .

LAST MONTH

Our outing to Rozelle Hospital was very successful and well attended by society members young and old. The hospital has not previously run tours of the grounds so we were especially fortunate to have someone show us around. The weather couldn't have been better and the grounds provided a perfect setting for the many beautiful stone buildings that form part of the hospital. Thank you, Dora Lenane for organising the outing.

MEETING PROGRAMME

MAY 11   NOEL THORPE

"A History of Sydney's Water Supply"
Society member, Noel Thorpe, will give an illustrated history of Sydney's water supply from the days of the Tank Stream right up to the present moment.

JUNE 8   JOAN LAWRENCE

Joan Lawrence has written several histories of different suburbs of Sydney and regularly conducts history walks for the W.E.A. She will talk about how she started doing the history walks and will give some first hand advice on what to do and what pitfalls to avoid.

Meetings are held 8pm at the Council Chambers, first floor, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.

Members please bring a plate.

COMING EVENTS

VISIT TO POLICE MUSEUM
& FERRY TRIP UP PARRAMATTA RIVER

10.30 am SUNDAY 27TH JUNE

Please join us for a visit to the Police Museum which is located in the old Phillip Street Police Station at Circular Quay. Afterwards you'll be sent "up the river"! Up the Parramatta River, that is, to Meadowbank by ferry, which should be very relaxing. On the way we will make a stop for lunch.

Bring a picnic lunch. There is no charge by the society for the outing but fares and admission fees are at your own expense. Contact Joan Fairhall 546 5555 or Dora Lenane 660 2714 for details.
Look forward to seeing you!

"CHRISTMAS" IN JULY

7pm Friday 16 July

Keep warm on a mid-winter night and be entertained by *Tony Field* and *Flame* while enjoying a traditional Christmas dinner with all the trimmings. $30 per head. Book early. Contact Dora Leanane 660 2714.

MOOREFIELD RACECOURSE —

ANY INFORMATION PLEASE?

Alderman Anne Field, has submitted the following article for publication in the hope that it may generate interest in the history of the Moorefield Racecourse. Ald. Field is writing a book on the subject and is keen to hear from anyone who can recall or has information about the old racecourse. She can be contacted on 5886553 or you can write to:-

> Ald. A.Field
> P.O. Box 391
> KOGARAH NSW 2217

HORSE RACING — AN OVERVIEW

(part of an address by Ald. Anne Field to the Rotary Club of Rockdale)

You either love or hate the races. On the racecourse you expect to see people betting, shouting, eating, drinking, counting their money or bemoaning their losses. People come from every walk of life. In the Members' Stand you may rub shoulders with Kerry Packer, Lionel Bowen ex-politician or Peter Foley (a well-known Rotarian) or Mrs Jones.

Over the past century or so, Australia has made great progress in the world of horse racing. The status of the industry is high and it continues to attract investment in the thoroughbred horse. A visit to the Arrowfield Stud in the Hunter Valley, which I made in 1990, confirmed this fact and the high levels of technology evident in today's industry. Our trainers travel overseas to sales, likewise overseas buyers attend our yearling sales.

In 1799 the first English thoroughbred stallion, Rockingham, arrived in Australia - a cargo of well-bred mares had landed in Sydney from the Cape of Good Hope four years earlier. After 1820, the majority of imported horses were from England.

The first organised race meting was held in Hyde Park in 1810. This was a 3 day meeting staged by the officers of the British 73rd Regiment in conjunction with local politicians. Regular meetings took place at Hyde Park Course until 1814 when the Garrison was transferred to Ceylon. There was a lapse of the sport until 1819.

Racing was re-established, the A.J.C. was formed in Sydney in 1828. Where N.S.W. led, other colonies followed. As the pioneers settled in all the Australian colonies, the priority was to establish a Race Club.

Tasmania organised racing as early as 1814, Western Australia 1833, Victoria 1838, Queensland 1842. By the 1850's, there was the equivalent of the Derby, Oaks, St.Leger classic and weight for age races.

This change was promoted by the first Melbourne Cup of 1861. It proved that winning a high class handicap with more than weight for age can carry a lot of prestige.

The 1861 Melbourne Cup was won by Archer for 710 pounds. The 1979 Melbourne Cup was worth $310,000 with a $10,000 Gold Cup. In 1988 prize money was $1,650,000 with trophies valued at $35,000. Since 1990 the Cup has been worth $2 million plus trophies worth $35,000 - the winner get $1-3million.

The 1985 Melbourne Cup was the first with Fosters in its name. Louis Vuitton in 1990 became a major horse racing sponsor - joining with Hyatt Hotels they sponsored a 3 day event surrounding the Oaks Day of the Spring Carnival for the V.R.C. They trimmed their spending and in 1991 and 1992 sponsored the Louis McKimmon Stakes on Derby Day.

Big horse racing clubs attract between $15million and $20million in sponsorship each year. A range of events can be exploited from sales promotion to particular races to media advertising, cocktail parties. The main event - the race attracts T.V. coverage, a big plus for sponsors.

The sport is not the sport of sponsorship - it is dwarfed by the dollar allocated to football codes. These dollars are important for Turf Clubs which have been hurt by dwindling race track attendances. The V.R.C. in 1992 had 26 sponsors for its Spring Carnival. C.U.B. pays up to $2.5million for the Spring Carnival each year.

Back to the history......

It was not until the 1880's that the A.J.C. began in earnest to lift the game of racing. In 1882, a formal agreement was struck between the A.J.C., V.R.C., S.A.J.C. to integrate the rules of racing across the colonies. In 1889, trainers and jockeys had to be registered. In 1890, the A.J.C. adopted the rule that licensed jockeys were not permitted to bet nor have a share in a race horse.

By the end of the 1880's the A.J.C. had its principal instruments in control - deregistration of clubs and horses. Proprietary Clubs were established at Canterbury Park (1884), Rosehill (1885), Moorefield 1888, Warwick Farm (1889). Privately owned courses established in the 1890's included Kensington, Rosebery Park, Brighton, Lillee Bridge in Glebe.

The A.J.C. took a dim view of racing for purely commercial ends. In laying out their tracks, not all proprietors were concerned to provide the necessary long straight and sweeping curves to test the full speed and stamina of the thoroughbred.

Racing in Sydney in the 1890's was divided into registered clubs and those choosing to race outside the A.J.C. jurisdiction. Pony meetings became popular in the 1890's, as well as all height horses at pony tracks. The late 1890's saw stricter rules from the A.J.C.

No formal system of betting or licensing was introduced until 1883. Betting shops were beyond the law but managed to conduct business regardless! The 1906 Gaming and Betting Act was introduced to permit betting in the Course and to stump out betting shops. The on course totaliser was legalised in N.S.W. in 1916.

In 1933 unregistered racing went out of existence - unregistered clubs came within the auspices of the A.J.C.

Sydney Turf Club came into being in 1943. The S.T.C. acquired Rosehill in 1945, Moorefield 1947, and Rosebery 1949. The Ascot Course was sold for Kingsford Smith Airport.

The death throes of Ascot, Kensington, Rosebery, Victoria Park and Moorefield were long and drawn out. (The Kensington site was given to the University of N.S.W.)

The Moorefield Club last raced on December 2nd, 1944 on its own track. The S.T.C. continued to hold meetings - 24 in fact at Moorefield between 1945 and 1951. The last race at Moorefield was held on July 14, 1951.

The New Zealand T.A.B. had been introduced in 1949. In 1951, the V.R.C. proposed setting up a T.A.B. This became reality in 1960. Within 7 years all states, except Tasmania followed. T.A.B. revenue in 1981 was $1billion, in 1988 $2billion and in 1990 $3billion. The effects on the racing industry have been profound.

Issues in racing in recent years to be addressed have been race fixing, use of drugs, admission of women as trainers, and the admission of women to the Board of the A.J.C. - a recent unsuccessful battle for Angela Belle McSweeney. (The V.R.C. has now a female board member).

Let's return to a very local issue - the Moorefield Racecourse. This course was a 128 acre course that operated

from 1888 until 1953 - the last race was July 14, 1951. The course was bounded by President Avenue, Princes Highway, Marshall Street, O'Connell Street, Kogarah. A 9 hole golf course, Kogarah Golf Links operated inside the course until it was closed as a racecourse in 1950.

Moorefield Racecourse gained its name from the Moore family whose founder died in 1851. The land was left to nephew Patrick Moore who died in 1877 and it passed to his son Peter. Moore saw that Moorefield Estate was ideally suited to the construction of a racecourse. Two local residents, Mr Parkes and Mr Whitehall built the course. The course was 7 furlongs long, had a substantial grandstand and accommodation for 500 persons.

The first race meeting was held on October 13, 1888. The course was described as, "occupying a charming position on Kogarah Heights and the view from the grandstand embraces a magnificent stretch of well timbered undulating country, while the placid waters of Botany Bay and the hills in vicinity of La Perouse are the most striking features of the S.E. outlook". A handsome and commodious grandstand with refreshment bar and luncheon saloon underneath had been erected on the crest of the hill in the saddling paddock, and from which racing can be witnessed, start to finish.

The presence of racetrack at Moorefield altered the lives of people who lived nearby. Stables were located in Rocky Point Road, Stanley Street, Hogben Street, Kensington Street, Green and French Streets.

A well-known horse trained on the track was "Cave Dweller" who won 14 races at Moorefield, "Magnificent" owned by Mrs McLachlan of the Old Brighton Hotel won 2 Derbys. Other great horses were,

"Reading", "San Dominico", "Journalist", "Riptide", "Grey Nurse", High Jip".

More of this at a later date.

A local resident, who worked on the course for four years has insisted that the Course's history not be lost. I have promised him that we'll put together a history along with other interested local residents - I believe that our local history must be kept.

In conclusion, the history of racing in Australia mirrors many of the social, economic and political forces that have shaped modern day Australian society. Racing has attracted patronage from all levels of society. Its elitist and exclusive vision of the sport that prevailed elsewhere has not existed in Australia. Racing has exhibited a blend of pleasure and profit for the rich and poor.

Our well-known horses such as Carbine (1890's) Peter Pan (1930's), Phar Lap (late 1920's - early 1930's) Tullock (1950's) Kingston Town (early 1980's) Luskin Star (late 1970's) Vo Rogue (late 1980's) will live long in our memories.

No doubt today's winner of the Melbourne Cup will go into our Racing history.

Happy Punting!

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Special Thanks

1)   My father, Mr R. Field for my appreciation of racing.

2)   Mr R. Cunningham - a local racing enthusiast.

3)   Dr Joan Hatton for a History of Moorefield Racecourse.

4)   Rockdale Council Library.