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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

INC.

JULY - AUGUST 1993

7 Lynwood St
Blakehurst 2221

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

ELECTION OF OFFICER BEARERS

TUESDAY

13TH JULY 1993

Meeting will open with the election of office bearers for the coming year. This is your opportunity to have a say in the direction of the Society. So if you would like to nominate for any of the positions we encourage you to do so.

THE ESDAILE COLLECTION OF HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS

Here is your chance to get a look at this wonderful collection! Bernard Sharah will show a selection of slides from the glass negatives originally taken in the early part of this century.

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

Members please bring a plate.

AUGUST MEETING

10 AUGUST

WRITERS OF ST GEORGE JAMES KANE.

The St George District has produced a number of very popular and wide acclaimed writers - Miles Franklin, Christina Stead and humourist Clive James. Come along to hear James Kane talk about these famous authors and their local connections.

OFFICE HOLDERS

PRESIDENT: Arthur Ellis 529 4879

SECRETARY: Mrs Val Beehag 546 2819

TREASURER: Mrs Margaret Persen 771 5461

SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT: Noel Beehag 546 2819

VICE PRESIDENTS: Joan Hatton and Bernard Sharah

RESEARCH OFFICER: Arthur Ellis 587 1159

SOCIAL SECRETARIES and PROMOTIONS OFFICERS:

Mrs Joan Fairhall 546 5555 and Mrs Dora Lenane 660 2714

BULLETIN EDITOR: Bernard Sharah 567 8989

LYDHAM HALL COMMITTEE:

Mr A Ellis, Miss B.Otton, Mrs V.Beehag

AUDITOR: Mrs L Thompson

All correspondence to the Secretary, 7 Lynwood St Blakehurst
2221

TEMPE HOUSE HERITAGE INSPECTION

After some considerable time and effort spent attempting to prod the NSW Heritage Council into some action over Tempe House an inspection was carried out on Friday 2nd July. Representatives from the National Trust and Qantek were also present. Overall, the Heritage Council is very satisfied with the maintenance of the building. The only structural deterioration reported was some water damage to the St Magdalen Chapel.

On the matter of security the inspection committee noted that the building is continuously occupied so that there are at least 2 people in the house at any one time. A total of seven priests live in the house at present. Another issue of concern was the dumping of landfill on the Cooks River foreshore in front of Tempe House. Qantek have indicated that they will remove the excess soil from the site.

Qantek are unsure at this stage as to the future use of the property but stated that this matter would be decided within the next twelve months.

Our thanks to Mayor Ron Rathbone who has been recently appointed to the Heritage Council for arranging the visit.

COMING EVENTS

TOUR OF THE QUARANTINE STATION NORTH HEAD

SUNDAY 8TH AUGUST

Meet at the Manly Wharf at Circular Quay at 10.45am to catch 11am ferry to Manly.

Lunch at Manly. Then bus from outside the wharf at 1pm takes us to entrance of Quarantine Station.

Guided tour lasts 1 1/2 to 2 hours. Costs \$6 adults, \$4 children/concession.

Bookings: Dora Lenane Ph.660 2714

A VISIT TO SYDNEY OBSERVATORY

Monday 30th August

Meet at 10am at Sydney Observatory for guide tour lasting an hour and half (cost \$2.00). Afterwards join us for a pleasant stroll through the historic Rocks area, then lunch at a restaurant nearby.

Please book early: Dora Lenane Ph.660 2714.

"CHRISTMAS" IN JULY

at

BARDWELL PARK RSL

7pm Friday 16 July

There are still vacancies for our "Christmas in July" dinner. Enjoy all the traditional mid-winter Christmas fare in an appropriately cosy atmosphere. Entertainment is provided. \$30 per head. Contact Dora Lenane 660 2714.

Joan Fairhall and Dora Lenane wish to thank our members for the co-operation and support we have received. It makes our efforts more rewarding.

DEAD, ONE WOUNDED IN AMAZING ROCKLE

GUN SPRAY PARTY ATTACKED AT LUNCH

3 WOMEN AND MAN SLAIN

RELIGIOUS MANIC FOUND DEAD; BELIEVED TO HAVE SHOT HIMSELF

A man, believed to have been a religious fanatic, ran amok at a house in Harrow-road, Rockdale, this afternoon, when the family was at lunch, and killed a man and two women, wounded an old man, and then shot himself with a rifle.

Two rifles and hundreds of cartridges were found in the room of the de-mmented man, who was dead when a neighbor made the ghastly discovery.

The sole survivor of the tragedy is an aged man, Joseph Palmer, who is an invalid, and blind. He was found just outside the door, badly wounded, and was murmuring something about "murder in the house."

The dead are:—
GARNET ROBB, aged 44, returned soldier.
MISS PALMER, aged 36.
MRS. ARHLEY, housekeeper.

well as a long knife, sharpened to a fine point.
From inquiries made by the police it is learned that Garnet Robb had come down to Rockdale from Nimbin.

It was a most peaceful and secluded spot.

Joseph Palmer is now lying in the St. George Hospital in a very low condition with two bullet wounds in the abdomen. Mrs. Edith Palmer died about half an hour after her admission to the hospital. She had two bullet wounds in the chest.

Elizabeth Ashley, Mrs. Claude Palmer, and Alexander Robb, were dead on admission to the hospital.

Hardened police officers say that the sight which they saw when they entered the kitchen of the Palmer house was the most awful that they had ever seen. The place was literally splashed with blood.

Bullets Found

Two spent bullets were picked up in the room by the police. One of these had been flattened against the wall.

Mrs. Claude Palmer, it is stated, has a daughter aged 16, who works in the city. Friends will take charge of the girl.

Mr. Stanway, a tobacconist, who has a shop in Harrow-road, about 200 yards from the Palmer's house, states that he went to school with Alexander Robb. He had always found him rather peculiar and reserved; but lately Robb had seemed to have something on his mind.

On Tuesday Robb came into his shop for a shave and behaved strangely, taking up one of two razors and trying the edge on his thumb. Stanway asked him facetiously if he were going to

It is alleged that he was a religious fanatic and a spiritualist, and that the Palmer family were trying to get rid of him, as they were afraid of him.

It would appear that as the family were sitting at lunch Robb came into the room with a rifle, shot them, and then went upstairs and shot himself. He had taken the boot off and had apparently slipped the trigger of the rifle with his toe.

The house is a large two-story building of white concrete.

Alexander Robb was a returned soldier, and had a large family in the Northern Rivers. It is stated that he said recently that he was going to South Africa to capture a number of monkeys and bring them back for the children in the streets to play with.

His uncle, Joseph Palmer, was formerly employed in the railways, but retired many years ago. He has been blind for some time, and was being nursed by his wife, Mrs. Edith Palmer.

Elizabeth Ashley, the housekeeper, had been with the Palmer family for a long time.

Mrs. Edith Palmer, the daughter-in-law, was a skilled pianist, and played with the Chorus Girls' Musical Society. For professional purposes she used her maiden name of Edith Dierker.

Her husband was absent on business. He was sent for and went into the house with the detectives shortly after 4 p.m.

The Palmer home stands back from the road about 20 feet in a large garden. There is a large bed of land round it, and a number of fowls were



Mrs. Claude Palmer (Miss Edith Dierker, of the Chorus Girls). Mrs. Palmer was one of the best known and most popular women in Rockdale, and did an immense amount of charitable work.

do something desperate. Robb replied: "I am going to slaughter two or three of them."

Mr. Stanway did not attach any particular importance to this remark, and did not mention it to Robb's relatives.

Robb, he said, always seemed to him a typical country man. He understood that he had recently sold his farm

VICTORY!

N.S.W. WINS

SHIELD CRICKET

BRADMAN'S GREAT KNOCK

BRISBANE, Thursday.
New South Wales won the Sheffield Shield match against Queensland by six wickets and three runs.

A feature of the match was Bradman's double century. He played beautifully in the second innings, passing his first innings total by two runs. Bradman is the tenth man to make a double century in the history of Sheffield cricket. Peculiarly enough, four of them, Jackson, Kippax, O'Connor and Bradman played in this match.

Bradman 88 and Morgan 6, opened to the bowling of Thurlow, but Morgan was dismissed within a few minutes.

Play opened sensationally, and after Bradman, with a nice cover drive, had scored three, Thurlow with the last ball of the over shattered Morgan's stumps.

It was a beautiful ball that, rose sharply and Morgan hit over it. Four wickets were down for 224.

THE SCORES

QUEENSLAND	
First innings	224
Second innings	252
NEW SOUTH WALES	
First innings	246
Second innings	211

BOWLING	
Q.	N.S.W.
Thurlow	11
Ozgenham	11
Thompson	11
Thompson	11
Thompson	11

N.S.W. won by six wickets and three runs.

Thurlow and Ozgenham were bowling splendidly, and the fieldsmen were like hounds at the leash.

The batsmen took no risks. Ozgenham bowled a maiden, and then Bradman, with a fine cover drive off Thurlow, ran three, making 88. Bradman followed with a glorious shot through fine slips to the pickets, giving him double century.

Double Century

Bradman shot through the slips off Thurlow, who had replaced W. W. Thurlow. He got another single through the slips, and had achieved another century in the match. His century had taken 211 minutes, and included seven fours. It was a match-winning effort.

Shortly afterwards Love, with a neat, leg-stroke gave N.S.W. 553 on the board, and 151 minutes, and put them nearer the coveted goal.

Nothing, who displaced Ozgenham, and Thompson were keeping the batsmen quiet, but they were gradually nearing their goal. Bradman opened out to Thompson, and straight drove him for two runs.

With ten runs to win there was much speculation as to whether Bradman, who was 124, would pass his previous 121. The batsmen, with plenty of time to spare did not hurry the scoring. The winning stroke of the match was hit by Bradman, who with an on-drive off Thurlow, made the score 401. With the stroke he also passed his first innings score by two runs. N.S.W. won by six wickets and three runs.

ONLY TWO FUNERALS

MANY TO-MORROW

Owing to the Undertakers' Association Union holding their annual picnic at Clifton Gardens to-day there was only one burial and one cremation at Rockdale. There will be a large number of burials to-morrow.

SKITTLE

VIC. WICKETS

DAZZLING LARWOOD

JUST MISSED THE H

MELBOURNE

Batting first, Victoria collapse against England to-day.

Woodfull was nearly clean second ball from Tate and then, was only 19, Larwood shattered Po Hendry came in and had only made a victim to the English express.

Later in the day, Larwood trick, Ellis spoilt it when he survived but that was the extent of his innings.

When rain interrupted play he had secured all seven wickets.

Quite the feature of the day's play was this sensational bowling. Larwood did not seem much faster through the air than in Adelaide, but he was faster off the wicket.

His first victim in Australia was the world record holder, Ponford.

The weather was close and humid when the match between England and Victoria began this morning. As anticipated, Leyland was included in the

THE TEAMS

ENGLAND	VICTORIA
A. F. Chapman	W. M. Woodfull
W. B. Ponsford	W. B. Ponsford
D. A. Jardine	J. Ryder
J. B. Hobbs	H. L. Hendry
A. E. Biles	A. E. Biles
M. J. L. Wood	A. E. Biles
M. W. Tate	E. B. Biles
E. B. Biles	F. C. Hendry
G. B. Biles	F. C. Hendry
M. J. L. Wood	F. C. Hendry
M. J. L. Wood	F. C. Hendry
L. Ames (11)	E. B. Biles (11)

English team, Staples' foot being too sore to permit of his playing.

Before the game, began, Messrs. Hean, Toone, Chapman, and Woodfull conferred, and decided to play the game under local conditions. The English captain and manager adopted a very sporting spirit in this regard, with the result that the wicket will be covered throughout the game, as is usual in Melbourne.

Furthermore, the follow-on will be optional, with 150 runs the margin, and an innings may be closed at any time after the first day.

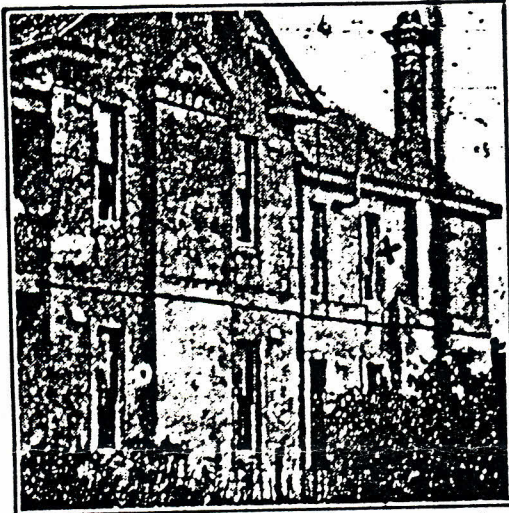
Larwood Shows 1

This brought Woodfull opposite the fast man, and Chapman took Tate from short leg to third slip, making four in all. Woodfull, however, pushed the ball away for a single. This gave Ponsford a chance, and he played Larwood cleverly between second and third slip to the fence.

and then played him wide off mid-on for one running ten.

Larwood was shaping nicely. Twice he hit Larwood hard, but Ponsford, in the gully, batted beautifully. At this stage people began to move to the stand, as light rain fell. The last ball

and then played him wide off mid-on for one running ten. Larwood was shaping nicely. Twice he hit Larwood hard, but Ponsford, in the gully, batted beautifully. At this stage people began to move to the stand, as light rain fell. The last ball



The house in Harrow-road, Rockdale, where three women and a man were shot dead this afternoon, and another man is critically wounded.

MRS. EDITH PALMER, Jan., aged 36.

The wounded man is:—
JOSEPH PALMER.
He is in a critical condition in St. George's Hospital.

Two wagons from the St. George Ambulance were rushed to the scene of the shooting.

Reginald Bell and Constables Douglas Collins and Wilson (Rockdale), hastened to the house.

Word of the shooting was received at police headquarters, and Detective Sergeant Comans went to Rockdale.

The tragedy was discovered shortly after lunch to-day by Mrs. Bagnall, wife of Mr. Bagnall, ex-M.L.A., who went found to the house of Mr. Palmer in Harrow-road, Rockdale. To pick up Mrs. Claude (Edith) Palmer, whom she was taking out for a visit.

As she approached the house she saw Mr. Palmer, who is an old man about 60 years of age, sitting on a chair just outside the kitchen. He murmured something that sounded like "murder in the house."

Mrs. Bagnall went on into the kitchen. The first thing that she saw was Mrs. Edith Palmer, wife of Claude Palmer, Mr. Palmer's son, lying on the sofa. She was able to call for help. She had been shot, but was not dead.

Mrs. Bagnall at once rushed out and called the police. When the police came and searched the house they found in an upstairs room Garnet Robb, a nephew of Mr. Palmer. He was lying dead on the bed, with a bullet wound in his chest and powder burns around the wound.

In the room were two rifles, and hundreds of rounds of ammunition, as

SYDNEY EXCHANGE

SOME FOLKS GET ALL THE FUN

THE DARK SIDE OF LOCAL HISTORY - ST ELMO

Sometimes local history reveals its dark side as is the case with St Elmo of Harrow Road, Bexley. The elegant and imposing Victorian house was the scene of a grisly multiple murder case in the 1920's.

St Elmo is probably more well known to Bexleyites and other locals as the house with the kookaburra motif on its gable. It is one of a number of distinctive houses designed by talented local architect, William Kenwood. On the opposite side of Harrow Road is a row of cottages named variously, Pevensey, Arundel, and other place names from the English county where Kenwood was born. William Kenwood also designed the old Brighton Hotel and his son, Thomas, designed the St George Leagues Club building.

St Elmo was built in 1897 for Joseph Palmer, a senior officer in the Department of Railways. The building itself is a good example of the Italianate style

On the opposite page is a copy of The Sun (1st November 1928) reporting the mass murder. A nephew of Joseph Palmer who was staying with the family ran amok shooting the 83 year old Mr Palmer, Mr Palmer's daughter-in-law, niece and housekeeper before turning the gun on himself.

At the inquest the Coroner was critical of one witness, Thomas Stanway, a tobacconist whose store was located nearby. Stanway disregarded threats against the family made by the murderer on the morning of the massacre.

Many years later, Ald. Ron Rathbone, who was headmaster of Bexley Public School at time, devised a play called "Murder at St.Elmo's". The interest created by the play prompted Ron to take large groups of curious school children down to the house to survey the scene of the crime. He was later embarrassed to learn that the surviving member of the Palmer family had remarried was still living in the house at the time.

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS

In past issues mention has been made of a collection of photographs originally belonging to the Esdaile family of Arncliffe. The collection consists of approximately 70 glass negatives of varying sizes taken over a period spanning 30 years. The subject matter ranges from portraits and family snapshots to panoramic views of the local area. The photographs record a depth of historic detail giving an accurate picture of what the suburb of Arncliffe looked like in the early part of this century. A selection of slides from the original negatives will be shown at the July meeting.

ON THE BUSES AND OTHER URBAN TRANSPORT

an excerpt from A DAY BEFORE YESTERDAY

by Abe Davis 1980

We already had electric trams in Sydney at the beginning of this century, though there were still some horse-drawn trams around the city and suburbs at the beginning of my period of recall, say 1903 or 4. Compared with the last electric trams to run in Sydney in 1961, the early ones were fairly small. The driver's compartment at each end of the tram was under the main roof but otherwise open to the elements; there was no windscreen or side protection. This construction led in 1908 to a strike by the tram drivers, who were fed up with having to drive exposed to all kinds of weather. At the pre-arranged time, the trams stopped wherever they happened to be and the drivers got off and went home. (I often wonder how far some of the drivers had to walk without public transport.)

The trams had footboards on the outside, just as the later toastracks had, but were so small that the passengers often overflowed and had nowhere else but the footboard on which to travel. When that happened, the conductor would stop the tram, collect the fares from the ground, and then let the tram start off again.

Sydney has had a variety of trams. Steam trams used to run to La Perouse from Circular Quay until somewhere around the beginning of World War I, there were others at Bexley and Parramatta, and still others on the Kogarah-Sans Souci run until 1937 when the electric trolley buses took over. There were a few double decker trams but they proved to be unsuccessful. Cable trams were used on a few routes, the main one being from Dover Road, Rose Bay, along William Street and down to the King Street wharf from where the ferries ran to Balmain. And, did you know, one of our William Street cable cars is still running today - in San Francisco!

Though there were still a few horse-drawn trams around in my early life, they were a rarity. Not so the horse-drawn buses, which were relatively common until the mid-twenties. I can recall three of the operating companies - Mallams, Rohrs, and Stewarts. The Buck Stewart double-deckers were the envy of the opposition. The depot was on Cleveland Street, Redfern, between Baptist and Bourke Streets, and occupied some of the area where the Police Barracks now stand. The buses would travel from the depot through Surry Hills and Darlinghurst, and terminate at Moore Street, which is now Martin Place.

The drivers had to reach Moore Street, where the Cenotaph is now located, in 23 minutes. They were given five minutes rest, and then had to head back to Cleveland Street. Come to think of it, those times would still do credit to a modern PTC Mercedes in peak hours.

The pride of Buck Stewart's fleet was a huge bus called "The Emulator" drawn by six horses. It held fifty people and had a spiral staircase leading to the open top deck. There was no other bus like it in Sydney. It was well patronised for race meetings, football, picnics and so forth. Every Saint Patrick's Day the residents of Irishtown would hire it to take them to annual sports gathering. (Irishtown was an area on South Dowling Street between Lachlan Street and O'Dea Avenue.) The Emulator was still carrying passengers to fights at Sydney Stadium until the mid-thirties.

Before 1925 there were few hire cars about; anyone who owned a motor-car could ply for hire without any official intervention from the State. In that year, Yellow Cabs were introduced to Sydney, complete with taxi meters. Black and White Cabs, Green Cabs and Red Cabs followed, (very colourful) and it wasn't long before taxis came under the control of the Transport Department.

Until the early twenties, the main form of individual public transport was the hansom cab, a two-wheeled chabriolet named after the English architect who designed it in the mid-nineteenth century. The driver's perch was high behind the passenger compartment and the reins passed over the roof. The roof had a small hatch which the driver could open and through which the driver could communicate with the passenger. The driver controlled the opening and closing of the doors from his seat. The main bench seat accommodated two passengers, and a slim third person could be carried on a narrow pull-out stool.

Then, as now, there were permanently established cab-ranks in the city and suburbs from where the cabs would run to any destination nominated by the passenger. The rate was 1/- per mile or part thereof; mile posts were sprinkled liberally around the main routes in those days so passengers had some means of checking the accuracy of the fare solicited by the driver.

The cabbies used to do their best business to and from large gathering such as the theatre, the stadium, and events at the sports, cricket and showgrounds. Race days saw the cabs in great demand.

On race days, a great many cabs took passengers from Kogarah Station to Moorefield Racecourse, and from Canterbury Station to the Racecourse and to all the main courses. They

also conveyed passengers to the Showground, Sports Ground and Cricket Ground, Theatre and Stadium.

After the races on Saturdays one could observe 20 or 30 hansom cabs with bookmakers and punters as their passengers wending their way down Bourke and Arthur Streets, Surry Hills, to a terrace of large, four-storey houses. There the passengers could celebrate their winnings with untold delights, or having lost, could be well consoled.

The standard of the cabs varied. Some were decidedly scruffy, but most of the cabbies took good care of their vehicles and horses. Many of the cabs were immaculate, with highly polished lamps and shining brasswork, lace fringes hanging from the roof, curtains on the windows and carpet on the floor, drivers dressed up for special occasions, the horses were groomed and harness was decorated and polished. Competition, both formal and informal, was keen. I remember one cab owner named Campbell, his registration number was 777 and for years he was recognised as having the best turnout among Sydney's fleet of hansom cabs.

At Manly, four-wheeled carriages serviced the Corso and the Esplanade. Greater carrying capacity than the hansoms could provide was needed here.

There must have been over a thousand hansoms in Sydney in their heyday. I wonder where they all are today. I am surprised too, that there are no hansom cabs on Sydney's streets today because we are developing a strong nostalgia for things of our past, and hansom cabs would be handsome momentos of a decorous era.

Annual Reports:

Unfortunately, the annual financial reports have not been audited in time for publication in this bulletin. Copies should be available for members at the Annual General Meeting and will be published in the next issue of the bulletin.