

SPONSORED BY
ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN INC.

FEBRUARY - MARCH 1994

7 Lynwood St
Blakehurst 2221

MEETING PROGRAMME

FEBRUARY 8

JACK GIBBS - "VILLAS OF WOOLLOOMOOLOO HILL"

Woolloomooloo Hill was reputedly Sydney's first "suburb". It was where the cream of colonial society settled and built their magnificent houses. Some of these survive today on property owned by the Royal Australian Navy in what is now known as Potts Point. Jack Gibbs, Civilian Foreman of HMAS Kuttabul, will take us on a slide tour of these reminders of another era.

MARCH 8

CR RON RATHBONE O.A.M.

"CHARACTERS OF ROCKDALE COUNCIL"

Cr Rathbone has some amusing tales to tell of the many colourful, eccentric and sometimes shady characters who have served on Rockdale Council since its inception.

NOTE: our usual meeting place the Council Chambers has moved to the 2nd Floor, Administration Building behind the Rockdale Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.

Members please bring a plate.

OFFICE HOLDERS

PRESIDENT: Mrs Bettye Ross

SECRETARY: Mrs Val Beehag 546 2819

TREASURER: Mrs Margaret Persen 771 5461

SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT: Arthur Ellis 529 4879

VICE PRESIDENTS: Noel Beehag and Bernard Sharah

RESEARCH OFFICER: Arthur Ellis 529 4879

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:

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

AUDITOR: Mrs L Thompson

All correspondence to the Secretary, 7 Lynwood St Blakehurst
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SOCIETY NEWS

Our Christmas at Lydham Hall went off very well thanks to the efforts of our organisers. Past presidents, Arthur Ellis and Don Sinclair, were presented with life membership badges in recognition of their many years of service to the society.

Arthur is currently on the waiting list for surgery (and has been since November) so we send our best wishes. Also on the sick list is Doreen Sykes, who is recovering from an operation - get well soon!

Society members send their prayers and support to Noel Beehag who is at home after major surgery.

We trust our friend, Peter Sage, is recovered from his stint in hospital just before Christmas. Peter was disappointed that he was unable to give his traditional slide show for the December meeting but we are looking forward to seeing him again in the near future.

SOCIAL NEWS**WED. FEBRUARY 23****MUSEUM OF NURSING**

The museum, which is located in the Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, houses memorabilia and artifacts associated with nursing dating from the Florence Nightingale era, through the Boer War and both World Wars to the present day.

Meet 10.15am outside King George V Hospital. (City bus 412 takes you to the door). After the museum visit we take a stroll down King Street, Newtown stopping for lunch at one of the many cafes.

Cost \$5.00 (does not include lunch). For details contact Dora Lenane 660 2714.

SAT. MARCH 19**EXPLORING HUNTERS HILL**

Meet outside No.5 Wharf Circular Quay. Catch 10.25am ferry for pleasant trip to Hunters Hill where we start our walk around some truly magnificent and historical houses and gardens.

Bring a picnic lunch to have at one of the beautiful parks on our way. Return Circular Quay 4.15pm

Contact Dora Lenane 660 2714 or Joan Fairhall 546 5555 for details.

GEORGES RIVER EXCURSION TRAFFIC

(An article from the Sydney Morning Herald 10 Sept.1892)

In order to test the suitability of the George's River for excursion traffic in connection with the Government railways, a trial trip was made on Saturday last by a party of gentlemen, including Mr J. H Carruthers, MLA, Mr C W Darley (Engineer in Chief of the Harbours and Rivers Department), Mr Kirkoaldy (Railway Traffic Manager), Mr Parry (Outdoor Traffic Manager), Captain Murray (owner of the excursion steamer General Gordon), and many others. The party left Sydney by the 9.10am train for Kogarah and proceeded thence by tram to Sans Souci, where the Government steam launch Dayspring was in waiting. The steamer left the Sans Souci wharf at 10am, and went from there to Como, a distance of nearly 5 miles, which was accomplished in less than 20 minutes. At Como the steamer ..(indecipherable).. express train leaving Sydney at 9.40am and then went up the river for 10 miles as far as Mill Creek, the time taken being 45 minutes. Mill Creek is only two or three miles by road from Liverpool. On the return trip the Dayspring made calls at Como, Tom Ugly's Point, and Sans Souci, arriving at the lastnamed point at 2.30pm. Another start thence was made, and the steamer proceeded to Kurnell, Bare Island, Botany Pier, and after skirting Lady Robinson's Beach finally landed the party at Sans Souci about 5pm. A number of local people joined the party at Sans Souci, among them being Mr P J Lacey (Mayor of Kogarah), Mr Charles Bull (Mayor of Hurstville), Messrs. F J Gibbons, John Sale, J B Carroll, J McNall, A E Gannon, J Gannon, H E Crane, W E Rust and others.

The question of opening up this route for excursionists has been under consideration for some time past. It was first proposed by Mr Carruthers about two years ago, and was afterwards taken up by Captain Murray, of the General Gordon. Along the route taken by the steamer Dayspring on Saturday there is plenty of water for a vessel of 7ft draught. The Dayspring draws 6ft 6in while the General Gordon only draws 3ft of water. It was the opinion of all those forming the party on Saturday that the traffic was easily practicable, there being good channels all the way, and the scenery was thought to be fully equal to that of the Hawkesbury River. The visitors from the Railways Department consider that the trip would prove highly popular, and would be a welcome adjunct to the railway traffic. There are many areas of Government land along the river eminently suitable for the landing of picnic parties, and for terminal points for the steamer traffic. The river is easily within reach of Sydney, and the round trip could be performed within four hours as follows:- Leave Sydney at 9.10am by train and tram for Sans Souci, depart from Sans Souci by steamer at 10am, call at Como at 10.20am, proceeding thence for eight miles

up river, and back to Como at 11.30am, thence by train arriving in Sydney before 1pm. Or the same trip could be made in the afternoon between 2 and 6 o'clock. The fares also would be within the reach of all. It is probable that arrangements will be made shortly by which the steamer General Gordon will run regular trips in connection with the railway. This vessel has made a name for herself on the Hawkesbury River and will prove herself equally suited to the trip now in contemplation.

**A GREAT FRIEND - VAUGHAN EVANS OAM
(1924-1993)**

St George Historical Society members will be saddened to learn of the passing of Vaughan Evans on 17 November last year. Vaughan was a great friend of the society and gladly gave many hours of his time to speak at our meetings on a subject dear to his heart - maritime history. Vaughan Evans was one of Australia's leading authorities on our maritime heritage. In fact he was instrumental in the foundation of the recently established National Maritime Museum. Housed in the museum is the Vaughan Evans Library the foundation of which was his donation of 1200 volumes from his private collection.

Vaughan Evans was born in Hendon, London, and served in the Royal Navy (Fleet Air Arm) from 1942 to 1946. After working as an assistant hull underwriter at Lloyds of London he emigrated in 1955 to Australia. He continued to work in the insurance industry as a computer analyst. He married Halcyon, daughter of artist Pixie O'Harris and Bruce Pratt, editor of *The Australian Encyclopaedia*. He retired in 1984 to devote himself full-time to, among other things, his life-long interest in maritime history.

Vaughan was awarded the Order of Australia Medal in 1988 in recognition of his "services to education in the field of maritime history".

Vaughan Evans would regularly travel by public transport from his Chatswood home to speak at St George Historical Society meetings. And always he would enliven his audience with a boundless enthusiasm for his subject. He will be sorely missed by a great many in the Society.

To the Evans family we offer our sincere condolences.

(Biographical details courtesy of RAHS)

WHO'S CALLING THE KETTLE BLACK?

It is rather sad to realise that some people spend countless hours accumulating scraps of useful information on their pet subject but never make full use of them perhaps never to organise their files so that they can be fully used by themselves, let alone by others.

Many of us who are not professional historians fall into this trap. We may die before our collections have been opened up again, even by ourselves. At the best they may be offered to the Royal Australian Historical Society, the State Library or other organisations by relatives, as a memorial to the dear departed.

The offer may not be accepted, for libraries and museums do not necessarily accept everything that is offered: they take the view that nothing is ever a free gift - storage, conservation, indexing, all takes time and money.

What if a collection is accepted? If it is not well organised it may sit gathering dust for many more years before someone has the courage, the inclination and the time to sort it out. Whatever gems the collection may hold are too well hidden in the mullock of the mass to be of real use to anyone.

In any case, how will others get to know that this potential mine of useful information even exists, let alone that it is available? Admittedly, as a Bicentennial project some private collections of research notes and archival material were listed in the *Historic Records Register*, copies of which are available at the RAHS, the National Library in Canberra and in the State Libraries.

However, many useful collections were never made known to the compilers, while others have been extensively modified before being listed. What is the status of your collection ...or mine?

In my own case, it has been on my mind for a long time that I have masses of miscellaneous notes on maritime topics. They are in various states of disarray. Sometimes I know where to look, and sometimes I am surprised at what I turn up when looking for something quite different. An enforced spell of being "housebound" while recovering from surgery has made me fully aware of this problem (and of my mortality) and has given me the opportunity to do something about it.

What triggered a modest start of action was a request for information on a certain shipping agent in the 1830's. This

is a question that might have been answered by searching through indexes at the RAHS or State Library, the Genealogists, and the Australian National Maritime Museum ... but the enquirer lives "beyond the black stump" and needed more help than this advice.

Fortunately, I vaguely remembered making a card index of maritime entries in various directories held in the RAHS library. Even more fortunately, I managed to find the old shoe box which held the relevant batch of index cards. The query was answered in detail at very little expense of time or trouble.

What is the next step? I decided to do what I should have done twenty years ago when the indexing was actually done ... that is, to make a list that would be generally available to other researchers. This has now been done, and copies lodged at the libraries mentioned above. So, if you have an enquiry about a maritime person or trade in NSW in the 1830's, why not look first at my *Index to Maritime Trades in NSW in the 1830's* which is held in the RAHS library, and even more to the point, why not think about any useful research notes or indexes that you may have which could be made generally available. At least you could then throw away one dusty collection... and think how virtuous you would feel.

VAUGHAN EVANS OAM

RAHS "HISTORY" MAGAZINE, February 1993

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ROCKDALE HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

At its December meeting, the Rockdale Heritage Advisory Committee decided on a dramatic change of course.

It resolved to recommend to Rockdale Council that the 200 or so additional items identified by the committee over the previous 18 months and currently before the Heritage Council for consideration be withdrawn. It was proposed that these be then registered on a separate list which would be referred to in the event of application for demolition. (Under the recently enacted Local Government Act property owners are now required to seek approval from council before a building can be demolished).

A cause for concern was the minimal discussion that took place before the move was proposed. It was not mentioned in the business papers that withdrawal of the items was being considered. The Society wrote to Council expressing concern on this point.

Bernard Sharah

A NEW YEAR MESSAGE FROM YOUR PRESIDENT

I hope you enjoyed the Festive Season as much as my family and I did. The weather was amiable, as was the company around me that day, and I couldn't help but think how blessed we are here in Australia, though many are having difficult times financially and employment wise at present, to have such a good climate, so many wide-open spaces for recreation and leisure and a bounty of good nourishing fresh food available for all ranges of income.

I would like to let know those who were unable to attend our Christmas Get-together at Lydham Hall Sunday 5th December what a splendid afternoon we had, and also at our break-up Christmas Meeting, Tuesday 14th December which we were fortunate enough to hold in the Council Conference Room. There was a very good roll-up, I thought, at both occasions and if you were not there it would be lovely to see you at the Society's Christmas "do's" next year (1994) and of course at our coming Meetings in the New Year.

I trust we shall have an interesting year both at the Meetings and at our enjoyable Social outings which have been very ably organised in the past for us. Do keep your eye on the Bulletin for these coming up. It is good to meet on these relaxed occasions and to get to know each other more, especially if, like me, you are a relatively new member of the St. George Historical Society.

The aim of this greeting to everyone for 1994 from myself was to wish you a Happy, and a Healthy New Year especially to those who at this time have felt better health-wise and there are number who have not been well. May you get stronger each hour of each day of each week and we'll "see you soon".

Bettye Ross