

St George Historical Society Inc.

Bulletin

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1995 Edition
MEETING PROGRAM

The Restoration of the Queen Victoria Building - 12 September

Mr Neil Glasser, former Director of Restoration for the Queen Victoria Building, will give members some insight into this enormous project which gave back to Sydney a magnificent landmark and tourist attraction. Mr Glasser was advertised in our last Bulletin as guest speaker for our August meeting but a change in arrangements took place after publication of the newsletter.

Turner Bros. of Kogarah - 10 October

'Turner's closing?' 'It wouldn't be Kogarah without Turner's'. Such was the reaction of locals when Turner Brothers closed their doors for the last time in 1975. Lillias Barrett (nee Turner) will give a talk on this family store which had been synonymous with Kogarah for over 69 years.

Meetings are held 8 pm every second Tuesday of the month (except January) in the Council Chambers, Rockdale Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale. Members, please bring a plate.

Just a gentle reminder: Members please try to be on time for the meetings. A late start to the meeting means a delay and less time for the guest speaker and, of course, a late finish to the evening.

DAYTRIP TO KIAMA

Wed. 4 October

Hope you can join us on a train trip to beautiful Kiama. There we will take a walk to the renowned 'Blow Hole' and a leisurely stroll around the town and see the changes that have taken place since your last visit to Kiama.

Children welcome. Bring your own picnic lunch. Train leaves Central Station 9.38am. Return train leaves Kiama 3.05pm. No charge but donations welcome. Contact Dora Lenane 660 2714.

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PUBLIC OFFICER	Mr Noel Beehag	546 2819
HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE	Bernard Sharah	567 8989
AUDITOR	Mrs L. Thompson	

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

At the Society's Annual General Meeting, held on 11 July, the present executive committee was re-elected with only one change - Joan Fairhall will now take on the role of Publicity Officer, which will be to arrange speakers and publicise our meetings.

SHORT STREET BUILDING DEMOLISHED

After a great deal of controversy, the 1890's shop and terrace at 35 - 39 Short Street was demolished on 11 August. Debate continues over whether the Rockdale Council-owned property was of sufficient heritage value to warrant retention. In my view there is no question that it was worth saving. The building was an intact example of a Victorian shop and residence retaining most of its original features. There are few surviving examples in the St George District, the only two coming to mind as somewhat similiar in appearance are the magnificently restored Centennial Bakery on Forest Road at Hurstville and a run-down building in Gladstone Street, Kogarah, that seems destined for demolition. The Short Street building was demolished to provide 'open space', but the tiny amount of parkland provided is negligible compared to the loss of history and character of the area. Over the past two decades this Municipality has lost an enormous amount of buildings from the Victorian and Federation eras, not so much through demolition as by unsympathetic alteration. This makes it all the more important to try to save the remaining examples which retain their original appearance, not so much for this generation, but for the next.

B. Sharah (Heritage Advisory Committee Representative)

Betty, the tireless, says sad farewells

By CHRISTINE RYAN

WITH a last, loving glance, a tireless behind-the-scenes worker said goodbye last week to more than 20 years service to the Rockdale community.

Miss Elizabeth Otton (pictured) has been resident curator of Lydham Hall at Bexley since Rockdale Council took control of the property in 1973.

Sadly, ill-health forced her to farewell the historic home, but she left with a wealth of fond memories and accolades from well wishers.

At a recent meeting Rockdale mayor Councilor Peter Bryant said Miss Otton had filled her role to "absolute perfection".

"Miss Otton developed her role at Lydham Hall to the level of almost irreplaceability, a local identity, a great ambassador for the council and a lady whose presence will be very sadly missed," Cr Bryant said.

Miss Otton, or Betty to her friends, has acted as gracious hostess to the thousands of visitors to the 1860 house, eagerly showing off the wealth of treasures and sharing its history.

She said she was "kept busy" caring for the collection of furniture, china

and ornaments donated by locals and allocated different days of the week to clean and polish each room.

"I have loved living in the home and enjoying the company. I have had a very interesting sort of life," Miss Otton said.

"I never thought I would have to leave, it feels like I have lost something."

Lydham Hall, built by Swedish stonemason Sven Bengston from locally quarried stone, stands on the highest point of land between the Cooks and Georges rivers.

It played host to a number of local identities before it was passed on to the council and the ladies auxiliary of the St George Historical Society in 1970.

Miss Otton moved to Bexley from the Bega Valley 40 years ago and joined the society in 1968.

She said she had a lot of fun working with the society to restore the showpiece little by little.

It was pleasing to see people had a renewed interest in historic houses, she said.

Cr Rathbone said Lydham Hall had become an absolute passion for the "fiercely house proud" curator.

"It is a real end to an era," Cr Rathbone said.



Photo by NA

This article on Bett Otton, St George Historical Society member and curator of Lydham Hall for more than 25 years was published in the *St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader* on 22 August. Bett's presence at Lydham Hall and at Society meetings will be sadly missed. In fact, Lydham just doesn't seem the same since her departure. Council will have a task in front them to find someone as thoroughly capable and reliable as Bett. They certainly won't find someone with the same amount of dedication and experience. The Society wishes her all the very best in her new life.

'Australia Remembers' **Kogarah Historical Society Display**

Kogarah Historical Society have assembled a wonderful collection of World War II memorabilia on the *Australia Remembers* theme. The display includes photographs, letters, souvenirs and an extensive array of authentic uniforms. On the opening weekend several hundred people visited Carrs Cottage to view the exhibition and it has been a great drawcard ever since. If you have a spare couple of hours on a weekend it is well worth a visit.

HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Rockdale Heritage Advisory Committee has had its last meeting under the present Council. In common with all sub-committees of Rockdale Council, the Heritage Advisory Committee, if it is to continue, will have to be endorsed by the incoming Council after local government elections to be held on the 9 September. The Committee was formed in 1992 to consider the recommendations of the Rockdale Heritage Study conducted by consultants, Meredith Walker and Terry Kass. Apart from its main task of reviewing the Study, the Committee provided valuable advice to Council on a wide range of heritage related issues and policy matters. It is hoped the new Council will enable the Committee to continue in the role of providing ongoing advice on heritage matters.

Meanwhile, the Heritage Local Environment Plan has been sent to the Heritage Council of NSW for consideration. Deleted from the plan were over 285 objections. As stated in previous issues of the Bulletin these deletions were made without any reference to significance of the item under consideration or any evaluation of the validity of the objection.

OUR VISIT TO THE NEW GLEBE ISLAND BRIDGE

Saturday 26 August was quite an interesting day. After we arrived at the Display Centre the guide explained so much in detail of the models and planning of the Glebe Island Bridge. Then we watched a most enlightening video of the working of the bridge.

Later, we walked around to the Fish Markets, which surprised most of our party as they hadn't been before and didn't know how large it was. After a pleasant fish lunch at Doyle's we made our way to Pyrmont passing some unusual buildings.

Allan Stahl

34th Anniversary

Thank you to all our members who participated in our 34th Anniversary Celebration at Lydham Hall. In particular thank you to Jean Condon who made booties and bonnets for fund raising on the day. The raffle of the 'Heritage Bear' was won by Stella Ericsson and redonated to be won by Mona Gluyas.

LYDHAM HALL

Below is a chart showing Volunteers who have been at Lydham Hall between 2-4 pm on the days shown, since our last Bulletin. During this time we have guided two Coach fulls of visitors from Historical Societies one Adult Education group and 50 children from a local school. We are also expecting 60 children on the 6th September to view Lydham Hall for their local History interests.

The ? denotes no Volunteer has offered their services as yet - CAN YOU?

1995	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	WEEK DAYS
JULY	15 Betty Robinson Bettye Ross	16 34th Annivers- ary St. George.	18 Tues 45 Visitors Val G., Bettye R. V/N Beehag, Joan F.
	22 Joan Byrne	23 Norrene, Joan F. Dora Arthur E., Alison E. Val G. Bettye R.	26 Wed. Bettye R. Val Garner, Dora Arthur
	29 Bettye Ross	30 Norrene Burns Joan Fairhall	
AUGUST	5 Bettye Ross	6 Val/Noel Beehag	Wed School (50) Noel Beehag, Alison, Bettye
	12 Val/Noel Beehag	13 Norrene Burns	
	19 Bettye Ross	20 Dora Lenane	
	26 Bernard Sharah	27 Bettye Ross	
SEPTEMBER	2 Val/Noel Beehag	3 Dora Lenane	Wed School (60) Dora Bettye R., Norrene, Jean Condon
	9 ?	10 Margaret Persen	
	16 ?	17 ?	
	23 ?	24 ?	
	30 ?	1 OCTOBER ?	2 Public Hol. OPEN Mon. ?
OCTOBER	7 ?	8 ?	
	14 ?	15 ?	
	21 ?	22 ?	

THE GARDINERS

A very brief history

The Gardiner family history commenced in Australia when Stephen Gardiner (born 1808), his wife Lucy (born 1809) and the first five of their eventual 18 children migrated (not as convicts) in 1838, from Sussex, England. Lucy must have been a strong woman as she bore 18 children, of whom 10 are recorded, and apparently a further 8 were deceased by the time their mother died in 1893. Probably these did not survive their birth, or died as young infants. Stephen died at a location called *Wingecarribee Swamp*, where the family had a property.

One of their children Alfred, married Sabina Hawkins and one result was 9 children, one of which was Edward John (born 1868). Edward John married May Beard and Arthur Edward (my father) was born, and eventually married my mother, Lottie Edith Digby, and in due course I, Bruce Edward Gardiner, came into the world, followed by a brother, Graham. There were no other brothers or sisters, I was born in 1927 and times were hard then. The Great Depression affected my father very much, for although he was a qualified tradesman (fitter and turner) he became out of work. Mum and Dad did not have an easy time in bringing up their two sons, but they managed somehow.

Over the years the family surname has been spelled (or misspelled) *Gardener, Gardner, and Gardiner*. I will stick to *Gardiner*. I do not think some of the earlier education standards in reading, writing and spelling were very high.

Edward John (my grandfather) became a refrigeration engineer, and was engineer in charge of the Sydney Cold Stores, Harris Street, Ultimo. Someone used some brains and the Glaciarium Ice Rink was built over the cold storage area, which resulted in much pleasure for thousands of people. I enjoyed ice skating (self-taught, as I could not afford lessons). Grandpa used to use his privilege and took me in by a side door not open to the public (ie. by a back door). I thought this was great. Edward John (Grandpa) was a very good citizen. He was elected Alderman of Rockdale Municipal Council for 32 or 33 years, including being Mayor in 1926-27 and 1927-8. He did not like politics in municipal matters, and was a genuine independent. On the final occasion he sought re-election he was worried that he might be beaten. He had a majority of many thousands. No doubt one reason was that he would not support unjustified rises in Council rates. He was one of those people who could talk, honestly, with anyone from an 85 year old to the lowest paid worker. A park was named after him, *Gardiner Park*, fronting Gardiner Avenue and Wolli Creek Road, Banksia. After his marriage Edward John had his home built at 16-18 Oakura Street, Rockdale. It stands on a hill on solid sandstone. One of the relatives was a stonemason who quarried blocks of sandstone on the site for the foundations, some of which are high due to the slope.

Arthur Edward and Lottie, my parents, are still living, both aged 94, but their life these days does not have the quality it used to have. Time takes its toll. Incidentally, Lottie met Arthur at the Glaciarium, and they still have love for each other.

Contributed by Bruce Edward Gardiner, a retired public servant who spent most of his life at the Metropolitan Water Sewerage and Drainage Board, Sydney, on clerical and accounting duties. Now retired.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
LYDHAM HALL FUND

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30 JUNE, 1995

	1995	1994
<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
<u>CASH</u>		
Cash at Bank - Commonwealth Savings Bank Ltd	2,446	2,006
- St. George Bank Ltd	<u>1,703</u>	<u>1,686</u>
Total Current Assets	4,149	3692
<u>NET ASSETS</u>	<u>\$ 4,149</u>	<u>\$ 3,692</u>
<u>ACCUMULATED FUNDS</u>		
Balance, at start	3,692	3,160
Net surplus for the year	<u>457</u>	<u>532</u>
Balance, at close	<u>\$ 4,149</u>	<u>\$ 3,692</u>

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY
LYDHAM HALL FUND

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE, 1995

	1995	1994
<u>INCOME</u>		
Admissions	269	205
Raffles	100	115
Donations	95	182
Society Books	219	155
Interest - Commonwealth Savings Bank	51	33
- St. George Bank	17	19
Sundry Income	<u>—</u>	<u>15</u>
	<u>751</u>	<u>724</u>
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>		
St. George Books Purchased	78	151
Curtains	174	—
Financial Duties and Charges	<u>40</u>	<u>21</u>
Petty Cash	<u>—</u>	<u>40</u>
	<u>294</u>	<u>192</u>
<u>NET SURPLUS OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>\$ 457</u>	<u>\$ 532</u>