

St George Historical Society Inc. *Bulletin*

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

APRIL-MAY 1996 Edition
MEETING PROGRAM

MEETING PROGRAMME

9 April

'The Davis Family of Lydham'

Our president, Bettye Ross, has been researching the people associated with Lydham Hall and has uncovered previously little known information about the Davis family and others.

14 May

Banbury Cottage

Bernard Sharah will present slides of this remnant of Rockdale's rural days and provide an update on the campaign to save this important heritage item. Included are interior shots taken just prior to the departure of the last Mascord descendent.

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.

HERITAGE WEEK - VOLUNTEERS PLEASE

Sat. and Sun. 4-5 May

Lydham Hall will be open to the public during Heritage Week on Saturday and Sunday 4 - 5 May. A photographic exhibition will feature interiors of heritage houses of the local area. We will need volunteers to man the museum. If you can assist please advise Betty Ross 589 0229.

OFFICE HOLDERS

PRESIDENT	Mrs Bettye Ross	589 0229
SECRETARY	Mrs Valda Beehag	546 2819
TREASURER	Mrs Margaret Persen	771 5461
SENIOR VICE-PRESIDENT	Mr Bernard Sharah	567 8989
VICE-PRESIDENT	Mr Wesley Fairhall	
RESEACH OFFICER	Mr Arthur Ellis	529 4879
SOCIAL SECRETARY	Mrs Dora Lenane	660 2714
PUBLICITY OFFICER	Mrs Joan Fairhall	546 5555
BULLETIN EDITOR	Bernard Sharah	567 8989
LYDHAM HALL COMMITTEE	Mrs B. Ross, Mrs V. Beehag	
PUBLIC OFFICER	Mr Noel Beehag	546 2819
HERITAGE ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPRESENTATIVE	Bernard Sharah	567 8989
AUDITOR	Mrs L. Thompson	

All correspondence to the Secretary, 7 Lynwood St, Blakehurst 2221.

25th ANNIVERSARY A GREAT SUCCESS

Thanks to Bettye Ross and her team of helpers the 25th Anniversary of the establishment of Lydham Hall was a great success. Bettye put a tremendous amount of work into preparing the display of 19th century linen and clothing. The open day drew people from far afield as well as generating a lot of local interest. Amongst the visitors was Mr Jim Clune, a descendent of Susan (also known as Sarah) Clune, proprietor of the Botany View Hotel which stood on the site of the present day Arncliffe Hotel. Another visitor was a Mrs Oliver, whose family had once lived at Lydham prior to its purchase by the Long family in the 1950s. She recalled how the house appeared to her as a small child. The Anniversary was staged over two Sundays and many members of the Society attended. All in all it was a great day for the Society and for Lydham.

ARNCLIFFE REMEMBERS

My first contact with Arncliffe Superior Public School was when I was 5 years of age, in the year 1925, and was as usual started in the kindergarten class, in those days housed in the building now known as the Staff Room.

The large tree adjacent to the building and on the eastern side was there in those days and appeared to be a similar size to now. No bitumen ground cover existed in those days but there were 'seats' or long stools under the tree where we spent our 'play and lunch periods' and at times schooling.

Our teacher was a Miss Allen who had a nice friendly and comforting attitude towards all.

At the end of 1925 we were elevated to 1st Class which was held in the building to the north and east of the now Staff Room. This was to be our classroom till we completed 3rd class at the end of 1928.

Sometime during this period we were issued with exercise books, similar in size to the now locally available commercial type books but with about the same weight covers, all coloured green.

Each month we were issued with a magazine printed by the Department which contained spelling exercises, articles on fauna and flora and some well known historical stories, - names of which I cannot recall. Each had some 10 double pages which we kept in a hard covered folder in monthly order.

In addition to these magazines we had what was known as a 'brown reader', which was basically the same size but about half an inch thick. The name of 'brown reader' was given because of the heavy duty cloth impregnated cover and it too contained stories, spelling etc.

It became part of our yearly learning programme, I think, till about the end of 5th class. Some general items of interest with respect to classes, furniture etc.

1. The average number of pupils per class was 45 and this was made up of both boys and girls.
2. We had two different types of writing desks - one type was from 2 to 3 metres long, with matching seat, for from six to eight pupils. The second was a two seater about 1 metre long. The writing or table section was part of the timber back of the front desk and this back had provision for 2 hinged seats. Under the main table section were two shelves to store our books etc. Each unit was held together at each end by cast iron frames and in all made for a neat assembly. These desks were standard furniture till the end of my school days.

3. Blackboards were generally fixed to an adjustable or movable trestle, to be located in the classroom, at the teacher's requirement. Laterly they were replaced by a much larger board, fixed to one wall of the room.

4. Each room had its own cupboard or in those days known as a 'press' in which books, chalk, dusters etc were kept. There were no carpeted or lino floor, heaters, coolers etc. in the rooms but where necessary timber slatted venetian type blinds covered the windows.

5. The school bell was originally located in front of the now Resource Room and Canteen on the left hand side of the entrance door - and not as located now.

6. The location of the flag pole was somewhere in the front playground - but can't recall just where. Each Monday morning all classes were lined up in the playground and given an address on King and Country and our allegiance thereto.

The following seasonal games were played at school and also elsewhere:-

(a) Marbles - variations included big and little ring, five holes, poison etc.

(b) Cigarette and Lolly Cards - these cards were found in the appropriate packets and contained photos of cars, cricketers, etc which we used to exchange to form a complete set.

(c) Kites - flying kites was a very popular sport, both making and flying them - most times we made then, due to the cost of the bought ones - the equivalent of from 5-8 cents. Competitions were held to see who could keep them flying the highest for the longest period of time.

(d) Tops - these were of timber construction, fitted with a steel peg costing the equivalent of approximately 4 cents. We would try to spin them within the confines of a small 300 millimetre circle.

Various other games were played but these were by far the most popular.

Now back to class details. Our teacher in 1st and 2nd Classes was a Mrs McClocky who we all considered to be elderly.

Our schooling hours were from 9.30 until 12.30 with a playtime break of a quarter of an hour at 10.45. Lunch hour was till 1.30 and we came out at 3.30. Sometimes we were allowed an 'early mark' of some 10 minutes or so, but not too often.

From 1st Class on, at certain periods of time, each child at 'playtime' was given a half pint of milk which was considered to be and was in fact class 1 milk.

Our 3rd Class lessons advanced with the introduction of dictation and composition periods which were to prepare us for more important and future English lessons. However to most of us boys, the significant fact was that as from 4th Class, we were to be an 'all boys' class.

Pupils who passed the Q.C. were elevated to 7th Class or 'high school'. As with most schools in those days, the pupils lived locally and our classrooms were in the two storey brick building adjacent to the overhead footbridge.

At the start of 1932, quite a number of pupils joined the school, from the southern suburbs to Hurstville. This of course increased the numbers of classes and their size. Our school hours were altered and we started at 8.30 and went through till 12.30 and came out at 3.00. Our additional subjects were science, algebra, business principles and geometry. These subjects added considerably to our workload and of course as a consequence many hours of homework followed. This did not interfere too much with our homestyle as of course in those days not too many people had radios or as they were known then, wireless sets.

Our headmaster or school principal in those days was a Mr Monaghan who was a very tall elderly thin man with greying sparse hair and for some periods taught science in the corner classroom in the library building near the bridge.

After our first year (7th Class) it was decided because of the influx of pupils from the southern suburbs to transfer the older pupils to Camdenville Public School near St Peters Railway Station to become 8th Class or second year. This was a 'branch school' from Newtown which taught only subjects for a commercial future. I was sent to this school where I completed 8th Class and went on to 3rd year as it was called, with the final examination being for me, the 'Intermediate' after which I left, to join the workforce.

Before I conclude this description, I would like to mention a former pupil and friend who was some 3 years younger than I and proved to be a very brave young man. His name was Gordon Knowles, the only child of newly arrived here, English parents.

In the early years of the Second World War, the Americans had large bomber aircraft stationed at Mascot Aerodrome. One of these aircraft, a Liberator, took off to fly in a southerly direction, had not become properly airborne and crashed into what was then known as Kyeemagh Pologround. Apparently Gordon saw the accident and either rode his bicycle or walked across a large concrete sewerage pipe (which still exists and runs from West of Marsh Street, Arncliffe to the Bay) to the scene of the accident. He arrived in time to help and assist the injured airmen from the plane, and do whatever he could to comfort them until medical help arrived - for his effort he was awarded a Bravery Medal, but unfortunately only lived a few more years afterwards.

Any person who was at school during the same period as I would be able to add to what I have already written. Years tend to dim past happenings and I guess I have left a lot out, but basically what I have recorded here will give some indication to those interested in the early days.

Neville Cooper

An extract from *Arncliffe Days Remembered* a magazine to celebrate Arncliffe Public School's 125th Anniversary in 1986.

An additional 4th Class privilege which we enjoyed was being allowed to participate in the Empire Day Celebrations, held on the 24th May, each year at Earl Park, Arncliffe. This park no longer exists and the area now is industrial, to the north and western sides of Arncliffe Railway Station and adjacent to Done Street.

This was mainly a sports day, and one in which in Assembly we sang old favourite hymn tunes of the First World War. This happened in the morning prior to the sports meeting.

All pupils were directed to attend the sports and to participate but if possible the main aim was to vacate the park for better things. eg. building and protecting their 'bon fires' which were generally lit as from 6 o'clock that evening.

During my 4th year we had a tragic school happening which shocked us all. A pupil, then in 5th Class named Patrick O'Hara was killed by a car during his crossing of Princes Highway between the school and Forest Road corner.

There were not many cars on the streets in those days so Patrick was indeed very unlucky. On the funeral day all school pupils were 'lined up' each side of the highway and stood to attention in a mark of respect as the cortege passed by in a southerly direction to the cemetery. After this tragedy the footbridge over the highway from the school to the Western side was built, and as you all know, still exists.

Our teacher in 4th Class was a Mr Jack Caulfield and he continued with us until the end of 5th class. In those days we had one teacher for all subjects. He was very well liked by his pupils, as with a little persuasion he would tell us stories of his war service, spent in the Middle East during 1914-1918 with the AIF. Not about the war but about the various ways of life of the local people and of their fauna and flora details.

Our 5th classes were held in a classroom now where the Resource Room and Canteen are. The pattern of school work was generally similar, but more advanced as we were now entering the 11 years old age group. I think that geography and history subjects were added to our subjects list but no doubt you have different names today.

During this 5th Class year we had a new pupil join our class, who was to be in the future, a very well known and respected sporting personality in Ernie 'Tiger' Black who became better known through his broadcast descriptions of Rugby League football and eventually a director of St George Leagues Club. He became one of my closest school friends.

On reaching the 6th Class standard our teacher, a Mr Davis, took us through to the final school examination known as the Qualifying Certificate, Q.C. for short. During this year we were allowed to do 'manual' work which was in fact making some small items such as pot stands, towel rails, etc. from timber. Our teacher was Mr Franks who walked with a limp but who was very well liked by all. On completion of our project, we were able to buy them for a small sum, to pay for the timber used to make them. All tools etc. were supplied by the school.