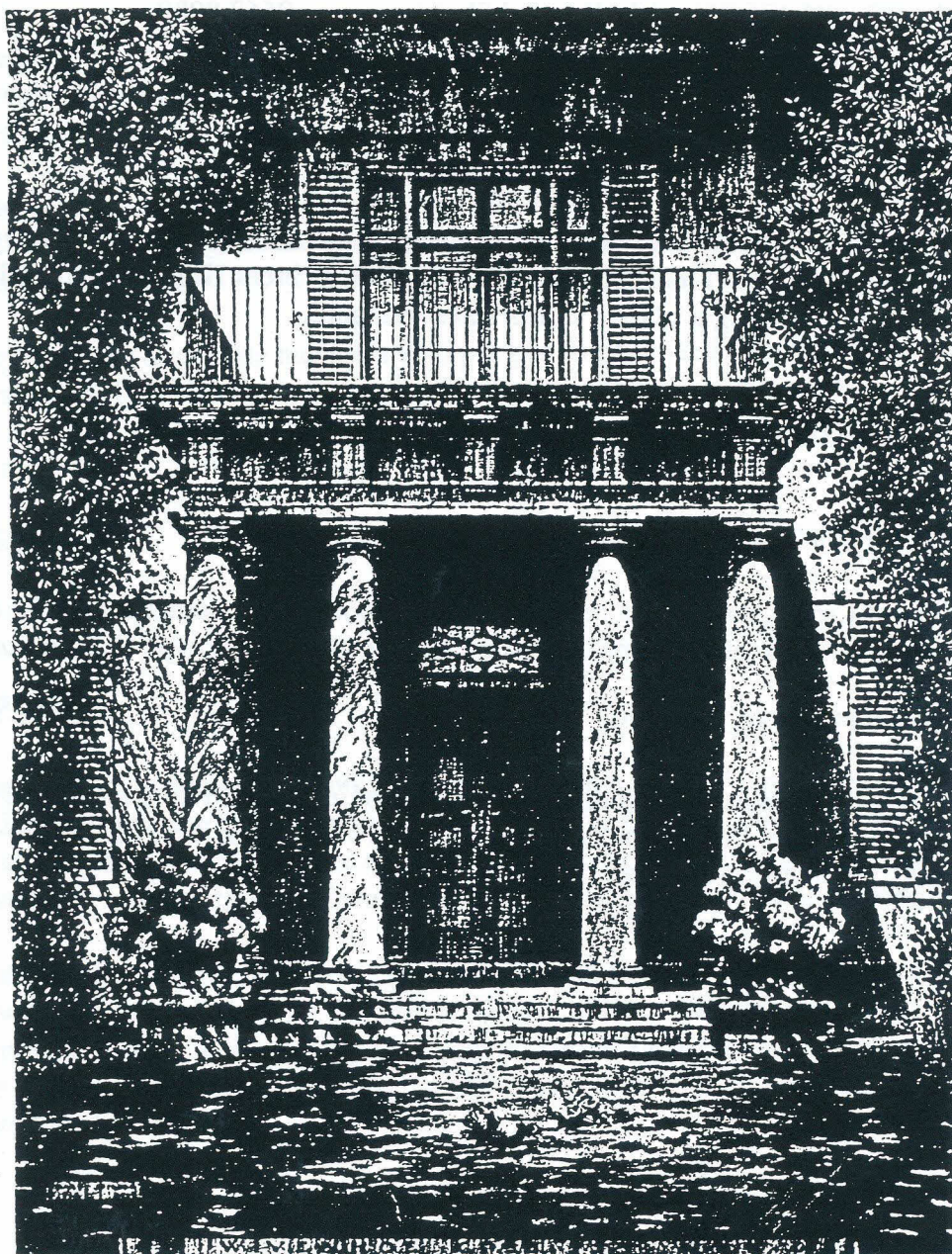


St George Historical Society
Inc.

Bulletin

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 1998 Edition



WVVENHOE

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COMMITTEE		
REPRESENTATIVE		
AUDITOR	Mrs. L. Thompson	

Meetings are held 8 PM every second Tuesday of the month (except January) in the Meeting Room 1st Floor, Rockdale Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale. Members, please bring a plate. Visitors are welcome.

NEXT MEETING

SEPTEMBER 8 The Model Garden Suburb

Mr. Vincent Crowe, author of a recently published book on Haberfield, will address the meeting on some of the many interesting aspects of this prototype Garden Suburb.

OCTOBER 13 "Show & Tell"

Members and guests are invited to bring an article of interest to this meeting and give a short talk (if willing) on the reasons for the article's value, even if only from a personally sentimental viewpoint.

FROM THE EDITOR...

As can be seen from the above table of Office Bearers, your trusty editor (despite fierce competition) has been elected President of the St. George Historical Society Inc. As I shall be wearing two hats in the Society, I would **GREATLY** appreciate any articles you as members feel would be of interest to our membership.

The incoming committee and members thank Mrs. Bettye Ross for her sterling and engaging Presidency over the last five terms. Bettye always gives 110% support and enthusiasm to the functioning of the Society and the activities held at Lydham Hall.

Our gratitude is also extended to Mrs. Margaret Persen. Margaret diligently undertook her role as Treasurer until poor health compelled her reluctantly to resign her post. Margaret's selflessness sets a splendid example to all people. We all sincerely trust that Margaret will be blessed with better health in the near future and look forward to her resuming attendance at the monthly meetings.

This edition features a short history of the John Verge attributed Camden mansion *Wivenhoe*. I trust this article will whet members' interest in visiting the historic homestead on our September tour. (Refer What's On...)

Closer to home, and in marked contrast to the above, the second article affords an insight into the makings of the uniquely styled edifice, St. Patrick's Roman Catholic Church, Sutherland.

Finally, thank you to those members who put pen to paper and communicated their enjoyment of the Bulletin, such positive feedback is most encouraging.

Kind regards,

The Editor

STOP PRESS

Times, they are a changing... Unfortunately, due to the Society's inability to foster a sufficiently large core of regular Volunteer Guides for Lydham Hall duty, we have been obliged to undertake a three months' trial from Saturday, September 26th 1998, of restricting opening times to Saturdays and to prearranged midweek bookings.

At the end of the above trial, a decision will be made as to which regular day/s Lydham Hall will be open to the public. Members, *please* consider the Lydham Hall Volunteers' Roster. Volunteering even once a quarter for two hours would help to fill in the blank spaces - as to quote from a higher source "...the harvest is bountiful but the workers are few..."

LYDHAM HALL VOLUNTEERS' ROSTER

Would all members kindly consider volunteering in the capacity of Lydham Hall guides. Guide work is not onerous, requiring two hours on a Saturday or Sunday 13th September from 2.00 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. Bring a friend/s and enjoy the period charm of your historic house. The following table indicates the days requiring volunteers. Direct enquiries to Mrs. Bettye Ross on 9589 0229.

AUGUST	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	SPECIAL DAYS
	29th V. Beehag	30th N. Burns	
SEPTEMBER	5th T. Cornell	6th D. Lenane	2nd Wednesday 11.30 a.m. Morning Tea for the "WEA" group. B. Ross, two other volunteers desired.
	12th N. Burns	13th ?	
	19th C. Welsh & A. Fields	20th W. Fairhall	
	26th?	N/A	
OCTOBER	3rd ?	N/A	5th Monday Public Holiday
	10th ?	N/A	
	17th W. Fairhall	N/A	
	24th ?	N/A	
	31st ?	N/A	

Some proverbs to ponder:-

"Better half an egg than an empty shell";

"A flatterer is the shadow of a fool";

"All who joy would win, must share it; happiness was born a twin";

"A handful of good life is better than seven years of learning"; and

"A fence between makes love more keen."

WIVENHOE - A TRANZUL RETREAT

Gracious *Wivenhoe*, a country mansion located at Narellan, is notable for a number of reasons. It is a classic "*Regency style mansion*" of Australia's colonial era, representing one of a relatively modest group of "early colonial homes of pre 1838" to survive in the region of Sydney. Most significantly perhaps, architects and historians alike delight in it bearing the hallmarks of that most celebrated of early colonial architects, Mr. John Verge.

Before writing further of *Wivenhoe*, a brief portrait of John Verge is valuable. Verge was born in Christchurch, Hampshire, on March 15, 1782, the son of a bricklayer, Nicholas Verge, and his wife Mary. Verges' had lived in Christchurch for at least five centuries, employed in the trades of bricklaying and stonemasonry.

Power of observation and hands on experience in the construction of numerous rural and city villas, mansions and terraces augured well for his prospects in the antipodes.

Following the breakdown of his 24 year marriage to Catherine Bowles, Verge and his eldest son, 17 year old Philip George, arrived in Sydney aboard the *Clarkestone* in December 1828. Initially, Verge settled on a property called *Lyndhurst Vale* south of what is today the township of Dungog. The effect of being under capitalized meant that he could not realize his dream of being truly self-sufficient in the tradition of an English country gentleman in the immediate future. Thus, young Philip was duly left to hold the fort as it were, whilst Verge sought the greener pastures of Sydney Town (then bustling with development and 15,000 inhabitants) in which to establish himself as a builder and architect.

The stage was set, from 1830, Verge could be said to have had Midas' touch. His clientele comprised many of the colonial elite. Identities such as Colonial Secretary Alexander Macleay of Elizabeth Bay House, William Charles Wentworth of Vacluse House, a driving force in the Colony's administration, influential "squatocracy" such as John Macarthur of Elizabeth Farm to name but a few.

Verge officially retired from his practice on October 31, 1837, coincidentally within days of Queen Victoria's Accession to the Throne. Retirement was spent at his property *Austral Eden*, located on the banks of the Macleay River downstream from today's Kempsey. Verge died in 1861 when aged 79, in the relative obscurity of *Austral Eden*.

The land on which *Wivenhoe* stands, formed part of a 600 acre grant by Governor Macquarie in 1812, to the Reverend William Cowper. In 1834, Reverend Cowper handed the property over to his son Charles and daughter in law Elizabeth. The name *Wivenhoe* was derived from Elizabeth's family home in Essex, England.

Charles (later Sir) worked on the Schools Commission in the 1830's and was a Member of Parliament from 1843 to 1870, serving as Premier five times. He is remembered for his earnest opposition to the Convict System and championing the development of the railways. He died during his appointment as Agent General in London in 1875. His wife Elizabeth was interred at St. Paul's Anglican Church, Cobbitty.

The house was built in circa 1837 and curiously, although Verge's ledger records a "pencilled sketch for a Barn" (the present stables) dated 1834, there are no designs for the house. Nevertheless, stylistically, it bears a strong semblance to the likes of the Macarthur seat of *Camden Park*, completed in 1835, as well as *Lyndhurst*, completed in 1837 for Dr. James Bowman of Glebe. These houses are well documented in the ledger of Verge.

The two- storied house although more modest than *Camden Park*, is still a fine example of its style. Constructed from stuccoed sandstock bricks, it features two very different frontages. The entrance front is adorned with a well-proportioned sandstone entrance porch, supported on four finely detailed *Roman Doric* columns and entablature. The garden front is graced by a colonnade of wooden columns emulating those of the front porch. The house is unique in featuring the only extant example of a "bell caste" roof carved from a single beam.

The current owners, the Sisters of the Good Samaritan, purchased the property in 1910 for use as an orphanage. The Sisters' currently operate the *Polding Conference Centre* to raise money for the *Mater Dei School* for children with an intellectual difficulty.

The interior of the house was altered in about 1910 following its purchase from the Thomas family including "modernizing" the original *Georgian* mantelpieces and staircase with *art nouveau* replacements.

Fortunately, much of the interior detailing remains. The deeply recessed windows still feature their original hand fired 12 paned glass construction and harbour splendid folding internal cedar shutters, doubtless originally employed to protect against the harsh summer sun, and uninvited guests such as bushrangers and hostile aborigines.

The generous use of Australian Red Cedar continues in the treatment of entrance ways, doors glow with a fine patina and are enveloped in doorcases surmounted by richly carved architraves, whilst high skirting boards abound in all rooms. The polished floorboards are typically colonial, being wide and well worn. Not to be forgotten is the ceiling plasterwork in the principal rooms, executed in a chaste and elegant style.

The stables, which now serve as an arts and crafts workshop and gallery, are constructed from locally made bricks laid in the *English Bond* style of alternate headers and stretchers. Practically all the wood work is original and can be readily viewed when inspecting the handicrafts.

Other more recent buildings, including the 1928 *Romanesque* style chapel are also worthy of inspection.

Bibliography

The following publications provided invaluable information for the above article:-

Old Colonial Architecture in New South Wales and Tasmania, by W. Hardy Wilson. Originally published in 1924. The 1975 paperbound facsimile edition published by Ure Smith in association with the National Trust of Australia (NSW);

Early Colonial Houses of the Sydney Region 1788 - 1838, by Daphne Kingston. Published by Kangaroo Press in 1990;

Information booklet produced for the *Mr. John Verge* exhibition staged at *Elizabeth Bay House* 8th April - 9th July, 1978; and

Miscellaneous brochures and leaflets produced by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan.

A WELL ROUNDED EXPERIENCE

St. Patrick's Sutherland can justly be called a labour of love. Teams of volunteer Parishioners undertook most of the two years' of work, encouraged by the tireless support of the Parish Priest Fr. Cruikshank. The voluntary labour saved the Parish \$700,000.00, or 50% of the overall cost!

From conception the church was to make a statement. John King the architect, conceived an imaginative design in which the church has been blended into its environment, bordered by the National Park. John King wanted to create a sensation of the world coming in, hence the abundance of glass walls leading to sunlit courtyard areas. The construction necessitated the removal of a hilltop and its subsequent replacement after the church was completed in 1982, akin to the present Parliament House in Canberra.

Fr. Cruikshank purchased granite blocks from the Flemington Sale yards to assist in the construction of the church. The blocks originally served as ballast in the very early fleets coming from Scotland.

A significant feature of the church is the lack of any visible structures of support, rather two massive steel girders 2 X 2 metres and weighing seven tonnes each span the length of the church from the glass front to the granite wall under the Radiata Pine ceiling.

An intimate part of the church is *The Blessed Sacrament Chapel*, which can seat 65 people under a warmly toned ceiling of Tasmanian Oak. This chapel is used for the daily morning mass and houses the Reserved Sacrament.

The main body of the church utilizes Tasmanian Oak for the window frames, doors and seating for 550 people. A local Irish lady designed the impressive skylight containing 100sq metres of glass in colourings symbolic of light and darkness.

Marble from Wombeyan in New South Wales, was used extensively in the crafting of the Baptismal Font, altars and lecterns. Surrounding the font on the floor, seven red flames recall the tongues of fire received by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost as well as seven gifts of the Holy Spirit; namely Baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, Holy Orders, Matrimony and *extreme Unction*.

Bronze has been used lavishly in the church, notably to fashion a remarkable set of Stations of the Cross. The Lady Chapel houses the "Smiling Madonna," crafted in Ortissi in the Dolomites region of Northern Italy. There are but three others like her in existence, as it is the practice to destroy the mould after the fourth statue is made.

The altogether different medium of a gold mosaic constitutes the *Lady of Perpetual Help*, brought to the parish from Rome, as part of Fr. Cruikshank's hand luggage!

Finally, as a symbolic tie with the *Motherland* Ireland, there stands near the front door, as proud as a "pint of Guinness", a piece of stone inset in a Gaelic cross. This comes from the *Hill of Slane* in County Meath where St. Patrick himself lit the first Pascal fire and preached the first gospel to be heard in the *Emerald Isle*!

The information for this article was derived from a church leaflet titled "*St. Patrick's Sutherland - A Parish Effort*." and a little Protestant editorial licence!

WHAT'S ON.....

A Delightful Highland Escape

DATE: Tuesday 15/09/98

MEETING PLACE: St. Jude's Anglican Church Bowral

A tour organized by the Church of England Historical Society will view the quaint sandstone church of St. Jude. A talk on the church will be given at approximately 11.30 a.m. and the rest of the day can be spent at your leisure.

The majority of people will be catching the 9.15 a.m. train from Central Station.

Everyone welcome!

COST: \$5.00 donation - inclusive of morning tea and drink after luncheon.

CONTACT: Joan Fairhall on telephone number: 9546 5555

40th Anniversary Floral Tribute

DATE: Saturday 10/10/98. Time 11.00 a.m. - 4.00 p.m.

EVENT: Australian Geranium Society Inc. Annual Spring Show.

VENUE: Uniting Church Hall Turramurra (behind the shops).

This Spring show continues on from the earlier Winter Show to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the Australian Geranium Society's founding. A truly spectacular display will be staged by members of the society featuring geranium and pelargonium varieties and species at the peak of their floral exuberance. Plants for sale will be available from commercial growers present on the day. A must see for all gardening enthusiasts and those who appreciate nature's beauty. Light refreshments will be available at a small cost.

COST: Entry \$2.00.

CONTACT: Joan Fairhall on telephone number 9546 5555

Camden Country

DATE: Tuesday 16/10/98

MEETING PLACE: Ormonde Parade, Hurstville at 9.00 a.m.

Due to popular demand, a similar, but less hectic tour to the "A Day of Contrasts" held earlier in the year, is being organized by the St. George Historical Society Inc. The tour will view the scenic Camden township and environs.

Morning Tea will be had at historic *Wivenhoe* run by the Sisters of the Good Samaritan. We will view the newly developed Arts and Crafts centre located in the restored 1830's stable complex. It should also be possible to view the superb interior of the house.

Luncheon will be at the *Camden Creek Herb Farm*, owned and operated by an affable expatriate Mauritian. Many truly rare and precious herbs and medicinal plants will be available to see and if so desired, purchase. The garden we are assured, will be flowering to perfection.

In the afternoon, a member of the Camden Historical Society will board our bus and take us on a detailed tour of the many buildings and sites of historical significance in the area.

Seats are limited so book early to avoid disappointment.

COST: \$15.00 donation inclusive of morning tea. Bring your luncheon.

CONTACT: Joan Fairhall on telephone number 9546 5555

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In the Beginning.... Down Under

DATE: Sunday 25/10/98

MEETING PLACE: St. Philip's Anglican Church, York Street Sydney
between 2.30 - 2.45 p.m. outside the church

The Parish of St. Phillips will be celebrating two milestone events on October 25, 1998. St. George Historical Society Inc. members and friends are cordially invited to attend the special thanksgiving service.

This is a wonderful opportunity for Society members and friends to meet and enjoy the fellowship and atmosphere of a truly unique occasion.

Please note parking is restricted, but St. Philip's is convenient to Wynyard Station and Government bus services. For more information refer to the newspaper clipping below.

COST: No official charge, donations welcome.

CONTACT: Dora Lenane on telephone number 9745 2067 or 9744 1239

This article was taken from the "The Courier Inner Western Suburbs" newspaper published on 17/8/98.

St Philip's Church in York Street, Sydney, will celebrate the 200th anniversary in October of being Sydney's first church, built in 1798 in what is now Lang Park.

The foundation stone of the present historic church, designed by Edmund Blacket in the Perpendicular Gothic style, was laid 150 years ago in May 1848.

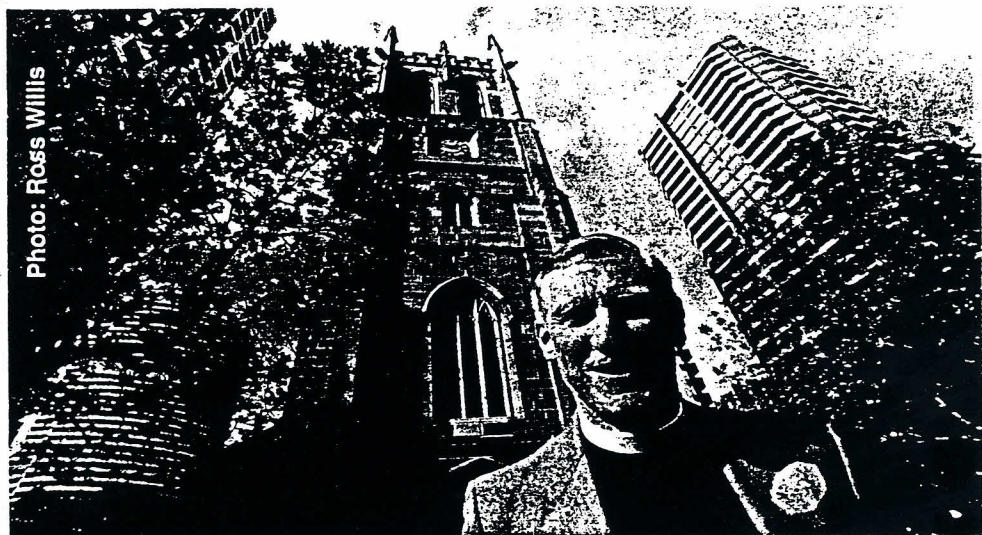
In its early days, the church must have been the most conspicuous of all – its tower being the highest point in the city.

St Philip's, as the parish church, will be honoured as the custodian of the silver communion plate presented to the colony by King George III in 1803.

The church also holds the Bible and Prayer Book used by the Reverend Richard Johnson, the first chaplain to the colony, during the voyage of the First Fleet and at the first service held in Australia, on February 3, 1788. It is intended to have these items on display during the commemorative service.

Records going back to the early days of the church are also held, many showing the beautiful copperplate handwriting of the Reverend William Cowper.

Baptisms, churchings, marriages and burials have



The present rector of St Philip's Church, the Reverend J. E. Jones, outside Australia's first established church in Sydney..

been recorded from 1788 and include the names of ancestors of many present-day families.

St Philip's is also fortunate to be the owner of an historic Walker organ, installed in 1873. A fine peal of bells was also presented to the church by Robert Campbell and was rung for the first time in 1859.

Today, the church is surrounded and obscured by giant office blocks and its halls and schools have totally vanished, but to all who love a noble church in beautiful order; to every modern Nathaniel who asks "Can any good thing come out of central Sydney?", in the words of the church's patron, St Philip: "Come and see." (John 1:46).

To mark these historic events, services will be held on Sunday, October 25, at 3 pm, when the Archbishop of Sydney, the Most Reverend Harry Goodhew, will preach.

For details, call the rector, the Reverend J. E. Jones on 9247 1071.