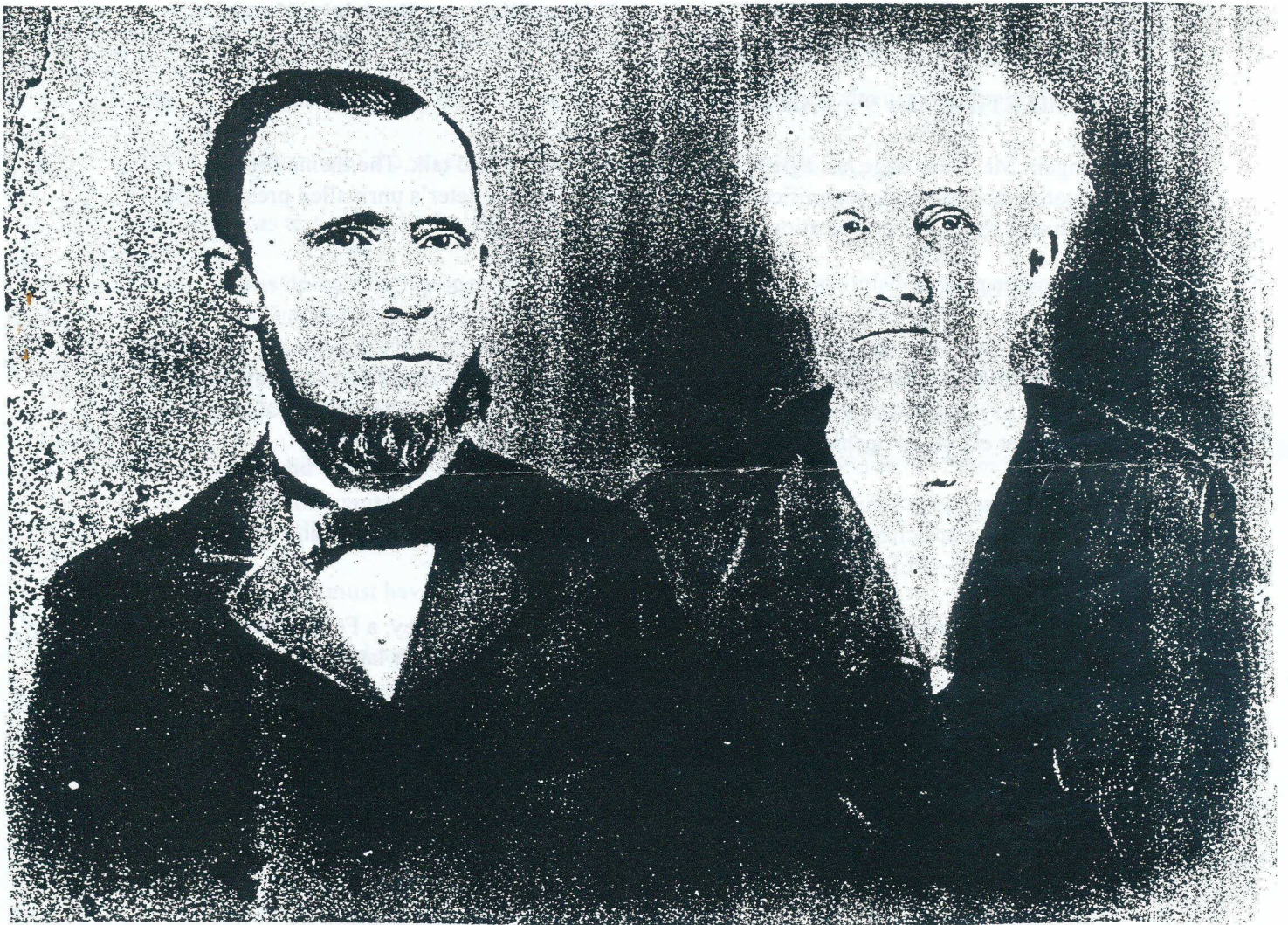


St George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

MAY – JUNE 2000 EDITION



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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 May 9th – Art Treasures of Italy

Once again Mr. Peter Sage has agreed to present a slide show and talk. The theme for this presentation embraces the magnificent art treasures of Europe. Peter's unrivalled presentation skills always make for an educational and captivating evening.

FROM THE EDITOR...

Thank you to those members and friends who supported the *Heritage Week* open day at Lydham Hall in the spirit of '*Our Sporting Heritage*'. The Society is deeply indebted to the talents and enthusiasm of Bettye Ross for designing and staging the day's display. Thank you also to Joan Byrne for her efforts in opening and making ready Lydham Hall for the Public.

Your Editor has yet to hear from interested members with regard to assisting with the editorialship of our bulletin during his overseas sojourn. As stated previously, any volunteers can be readily trained – PLEASE HELP!

The Society was saddened to hear of the passing of Mrs. Eileen Eardley, a Foundation Member. Mrs. Eardley was in many ways historical in her own right. She and her late husband Gifford were lifelong residents of the St George municipality. Mrs Eardley almost to the last remained at home in the matrimonial home into which she moved in 1925.

Both Mr and Mrs Eardley contributed generously to the Society through means of running meetings, undertaking research projects and publishing articles of an historical nature for the betterment of the Society and community in general. Our sincere condolences are extended to her daughter and fellow member, Evelyn.

It befits the memory of the Eardleys to reprint an article produced by them on two of Rockdale's pioneers. The article was originally printed in the March 1971 St George Historical Society bulletin.

Bettye Ross has once again donned her research hat. Her subject this time being a study of the famous Australian ornithologist Neville W. Cayley as an original work of his forms part of the Lydham Hall collection. Many thanks Bettye.

Articles are always welcome so do put pen to paper and contribute!

Kind regards,

The Editor

The 15 Best Things to Say if You Are Caught Sleeping at Your Desk...

- 15) They told me at the Blood Bank that this might happen;
- 14) This is just a fifteen minute power nap like they raved about in the last time-management course you sent me to;
- 13) Whew! Guess I left the top off the *Liquid Paper*;
- 12) I was meditating on the Mission Statement and envisaging a new paradigm;
- 11) This is one of the seven habits of highly effective people;
- 10) I was testing the keyboard for drool resistance;
- 9) I was doing a highly specific Yoga exercise to relieve work-related stress. Are you discriminating against people who practice Yoga?
- 8) I was doing a 'Stress Level Elimination Exercise Plan' (*SLEEP*) that I learned at the last mandatory seminar you made go to;
- 7) Why did you interrupt me? I had almost figured out a solution to our biggest problem!
- 6) The coffee machine is broken.....;
- 5) Someone must have put *Decaf* in the wrong pot;
- 4) Boy, that cold medicine I took last night just won't wear off!
- 3) Ah, the unique and unpredictable circadian rhythms of the workaholic;
- 2) I wasn't sleeping. I was trying to pick-up a contact lens without my hands; and
- 1) Amen

Source: The Internet

THE AFFAIRS OF ISAAC BEEHAG, DAIRYMAN, ROCKDALE.

Gifford Eardley.

Isaac Beehag was the eldest son of James and Mary Beehag, being born on July 18th, 1841, the address of his parents then being listed at Liverpool Road, Canterbury. In 1852 the farm property at Canterbury was sold and Isaac, together with the rest of the family, came to reside on a grant of seventy-nine acres, made to James Beehag, which ranged along the southern side of the present Bay Street, Rockdale, then known as West Botany. At the age of eighteen Isaac augmented the limited family income by cutting firewood in the Black Forest (now Hurstville), carting it by dray to Sydneytown and hawking it through the back streets for sale to householders in need of fuel for their domestic fires.

About eighteen-sixty Isaac Beehag married Miss Mary Ann Wilson, the daughter of a neighbour who lived nearby in West Botany Street. It may be mentioned that Mary Ann's old home, built of ashlar sandstone, still stands at 1970, although at this late date it appears to be occupied by Chinese gardeners. There were ten children of the marriage but unfortunately their first-born son, named James, died at the early age of five years. Then came Isabella, who married James Godfrey in August 1890. Ellen, married Thomas Jordan of Kogarah on March 17th, 1886. William, married Alice Fry of Sofala about 1891 or 1892. Maria, married Frank Fletcher Bancroft (a messenger at the Rockdale post-office) in March 1904. Margaret, who left Sydney in September 1904 for South Africa to marry Alec Burden, formerly of Climpton Street, Rockdale. Elizabeth, married Elias Godfrey in 1890. George, married Katherine Clissold of Arncliffe about 1894-5. Alfred, married Mary Jane Cary of Bexley, (related to the Parkes family), and Mary Ann married Francis Walter Worthington on April 14th, 1914, in South Africa. This latter couple returned to New South Wales in 1924 and the husband died in 1944. Mary Ann then married Thomas Beaman, a former schoolmate, at Moorebank on April 14th, 1958. This gentleman died in October 1960. Mary Ann, now a charming lady, approaching her 90th year, is still hale and hearty and is the last of the children of Isaac Beehag, a large and pioneering family with many descendants living in the St. George District.

About 1878 Isaac Beehag was still listed as a carter, and it has been stated that he was the first Town Clerk of the West Botany Council, which then met at Arncliffe. This clerical work was evidently carried out in an honorary capacity, possibly at the instigation of his father who was a local Alderman and fulfilled the position of Mayor for the second, third, fifth, and sixth years of the Council's activities.

It was in the early eighteen-eighties, or thereabouts, that Isaac Beehag disengaged himself from gardening and wood carting pursuits and became established as a dairyman on his Uncle William Beehag's property around Spring Creek in the eastern portion of present day Banksia. The dairy farm ranged along the shallow northern slopes of Rockdale Hill against the alignment of Tabrett Street where a herd of cows, some Ayrshire, and others of the Illawarra breed, some red coated, some white, and others a mixture of both colours. The dairy farm supplied the needs of customers living throughout the Kogarah, Rockdale, Bexley, and Arncliffe suburbs.

One particularly white cow, named "Lily", was a favourite of the milking personnel, but another animal, known by the distinctive name of "Ironbark", proved tough to milk and was far from popular. A good cow gave upwards of thirty quarts of milk per day (seven and a half gallons) which is a remarkable output. As cows do not recognise Sunday as a day of rest the milking team had no sabbath rest from their everyday chores, although the roundsmen had the afternoon off. To feed the cows it required the energy of two men, one to turn the handle of the chaff-cutter, and the other to feed hay into the machine. The chaff thus gained, together with a mixture of bran and corn-meal, had to be cooked on two occasions each day and formed the staple diet of the dairy herd. The cooking process was carried out in a huge iron cauldron, about four and a half feet in diameter, heated by a wood fire placed beneath.

Isaac Beehag is reputed to have been the first local dairyman serving the then somewhat scattered community, per medium of two milk-carts and three cart-horses. In between whiles he also indulged, so it has been said, in a little market-gardening as a sideline. A weekly load of vegetables were taken by dray to the city markets for sale, and when there was a surfeit of green foodstuffs it was occasionally necessary to bring the load back to the garden, a heart-breaking journey as no money had been obtained to offset the hardwork involved, the digging, planting, watering, and the gathering, washing, and bundling, all a dead loss, apart from providing luscious tit-bits to the ever hungry cows. It may be mentioned that Spring Creek, a clear pellucid stream of those days, bordered the garden property and its waters were dammed by a sluice gate, to conserve the necessary water for distribution by watering cans amongst the various growing beds. The banks of the creek were lined with quince-trees, the fruit of which proved saleable for jam-making. The crops grown comprised beans, cabbages, carrots, peas, turnips, and such like, whilst the bed of the creek proved ideal for water-cress, then in great demand for salads.

The Beehag family at this time lived in a small cottage with slab walls located near Tabrett Street, Banksia, on the higher and dryer portion of the land. The double-fronted facade was not provided with a verandah, the door opening from the outside path, whilst each of the front rooms had its small paned glass windows. The living room was at the north-eastern corner of the house and had an outside brick fireplace, broad based at the lower end, with its small rectangular shaped flue projecting above the roof ridge. A narrow verandah, flagged with sandstone slabs, led past the window of the living room to give access from the rear door to a single width separate kitchen which had its chimney (fitted with a "Colonial Oven") placed outside the slab walls. The cottage, free from any adornment, was purely functional in its character.

The four interior rooms intercommunicated with each other and were each lined with hessian, this rough woven material being nailed direct to the inside face of the slab walls. The hessian was well papered to prevent draughts and the entry of the dreaded night air. Candles and oil lamps provided lighting at night, being carried from room to room as required. Large circular shaped tubs, and a clothes boiler were provided for the weekly washing programme, the water being obtained from either one of the

three wells which were close handy to the rear of the premises. The buckets, dangling at the end of a rope, were raised and lowered hand over hand at the well-head and carried to the house. The water supply for the cattle was also handled in this manner, although further supplies were obtained from the neighbouring Spring Creek and its sluice dam.

It has been stated that Mary Ann Beehag, the good housewife, found a cool place for the butter at the base of the living room chimney, where the circulating breeze passing up the flue had the definite advantage of keeping down the temperature. An exploring snake wriggling in from the neighbouring market garden also found the chimney hearth to its liking, and was not above having a snack from the butter container. Great was the excitement amongst the household when the presence of the snake was discovered. Isaac raced for his shot-gun whilst a daughter was sent to play suitable music on the parlour harmonium, music calculated to inspire the snake to get a wriggle on. One would appreciate a knowledge of the tune played on this momentous occasion, apparently it was alluring enough to bring the snake from its hiding place into the living room, where Isaac gave it a blast from his shot-gun, causing injuries from which it did not recover.

For reasons which are now obscure it became necessary for Isaac Beehag to vacate the dairy farm at Tabrett Street as from about 1887, and take his cow bails and milking sheds etc. together with "Lily" and "Ironbark" and the rest of the herd of cows to a small wind-swept paddock at the crest of Arncliffe Hill. Little if any agistment was available at the new site and it was necessary to seek pasture land elsewhere, the animals being driven out and returned daily under the custody of a herdsman. A sufficient supply of fresh water was a big problem and daily trips had to be made to the unnamed creek flowing into Cooks River in the vicinity of the Cooks River Dam at Tempe. The family lived in a large two-storied weatherboard house, which, it is presumed, still stands adjacent to the present day Pitt Owen Avenue, a poplar-tree lined cul-de-sac once aptly known as Cliff Street, Arncliffe. The large house is now converted to a series of residential flats. Nearby and facing Forest Road was a small weatherboard building, flanked by pepper-trees, said to have been Arncliffe's first general store, an emporium which has long vanished from the scene. The stay of the Beehag menage off Forest Road only lasted about eighteen months, as the site proved most unsuitable in every way, and a move was made in 1888 to the orchard property of Mr. Ferrier, located in the Upper Spring Creek valley, on the lower northern slopes of Bexley Hill, where grazing and living conditions were more to the liking of the large family.

The Ferrier's house was a single-storied place, with perhaps six main rooms, situated at the then eastern terminal of Herbert Street. Beneath the wooden floor of a large verandah was a deep well, its trap-door covered by a long table, the water being raised by means of a hand-operated pump for household purposes and then carried in buckets to the section of the house where the previous liquid was required.

The orchard ground was spread over eighteen acres of which some eight acres were devoted to fruit growing. There were seven varieties of apple-trees, plums, peaches, nectarines, apricots, orange-trees, mandarin

trees, medlars, figs, mulberries, cape-gooseberries, grapes, damson plums, and also a flattish variety of Japanese plum. Guavas of both the small red and the large yellow varieties flourished and it is believed that an attempt had been made, without success, to grow pineapples.

In these shall we say fruitful surroundings the cows, some thirty in all, led a contented life, although, sad to relate, a couple died through the inroads of a particularly wet winter. These beasts, in good condition, each having a sale price of about thirty pounds cash. Evidently the place was unhealthy as Isaac Beehag also took a sickness and about 1891 he moved, with his family and cow sheds and other paraphernalia, to Mr. Stapleton's old home, known as Pembroke Park, at Kingsgrove. Here they occupied a weatherboard cottage, with two attic rooms, which was located opposite Smithson's famous wine-bar on Stoney Creek Road.

The family lived in these quarters until 1893 when Isaac Beehag decided to return to his earlier haunts at Tabrett Street. During his absence from this scene the old slab hutment had been demolished and a new cottage, built by the then owner of the "Belmont" property, Mr. Samuel Beehag, was ready for occupation. Isaac brought his now almost portable cow-sheds and bails from Kingsgrove and re-erected them on their original site. The cows were driven overland to their former pasture ground and everybody was happy. It is unfortunate that Isaac died in June 1894, leaving his good wife to carry on the dairy business until about 1901 when, her health having failed, the business as a going concern was sold to an Englishman named Joseph Moreton. It may be mentioned that the entrance gate to the new dairy farm was opposite to the intersection of Gibbes Street with Tabrett Street.

It has been related that Isaac Beehag was either the first, or the second, person to be buried in the then newly opened Woronora Cemetery at Sutherland, Mr. Charles Fripps being the registrar. In due course his beloved and industrious wife was laid to rest beside him. The Tabrett Street farm has long departed, and its place is now occupied by rows of modern bungalows, a housing estate served by Chestnut Drive and a pair of cul-de-sacs.

* * *

THE AFFAIRS OF JAMES WILSON. AN EARLY SETTLER OF ROCKDALE.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley.

Nestling against a background of scarlet-flowered coral-trees in West Botany Street, Rockdale, is the former home of James Wilson, a four-roomed single-storied building built of cut ashlar stone, which once had a shingled roof, and still retains its small separate kitchen at the rear. It is possible that this old house, which is still occupied, may have a claim to be the oldest cottage in the immediate district which was once known as the West Botany Farms.

It is understood that James Wilson came to New South Wales about 1850, accompanied by his wife and a family of eight children, four boys and four girls, aboard the good ship "THETIS". James Wilson found employment as an overseer with Colonel Johnson, a somewhat irascible old gentleman who owned the large estate known as "ANNANDALE", an extensive grant which is nowadays incorporated within the precincts of the present day suburb of Annandale. The men employed under Wilson came from all walks of life, and included Chinese amongst other eastern races, all working hard for a meagre pittance. There was a certain amount of sadistic cruelty about the actions of the top management regarding these men, a circumstance which did not make for harmony amongst the personnel, consequently when the "gold-rush" for the Sofala occurred most of the men left "Annandale" to make their fortunes, if possible, amidst the diggings and alluvial wash of the various creek beds at the Central West. After serving Colonel Johnson for some three years or so James Wilson came to live at West Botany Street, then little more than a bush track which ran northwards to dodge the rocky ramparts of Arncliffe Hill and to reach Rocky Point Road in the vicinity of Cooks River.

Here a block of heavily timbered land, bisected by Black (or Muddy) Creek was farmed as a vegetable garden, the four sons helping with the clearing, and preparation of the rich bottom land bordering the stream. It is surmised that the stone cottage was built at this early period to adequately house the large family.

The eldest son, John, married a widow named Isabella Grant, who had two sons by her first marriage, named John and Robert Grant. Two daughters arrived with her second marriage who bore the names Jeannie and Mary Wilson. John Wilson went to the gold fields to try his luck, like countless other people, but never returned and to this day his fate is unknown. His wife, Isabella, stayed at the home in West Botany Street until 1880, when she went to live at a cottage in Farr Street, Rockdale (then known as West Botany) for a couple of years. After this period she entered the household of Isaac Beehag where she remained until her death on October 20th, 1890. She was buried in the Wesleyan Cemetery in Bay Street, Rockdale. Her son, John Grant, became an Inspector of Fisheries, whilst the younger son, Robert Grant, became a skilled boat-builder in the employ of Harry Wicks of Botany.

Reverting to the family of James Wilson we find that the second eldest child was named Isabella, and eventually married Thomas Carruthers. The third child, Janet, married Oswald Harley, and then came David who was interested in horse breaking and horse dealing as a means of making a livelihood. In due course he married Sarah Brown, and the couple had a son who was also named David. Later this lad followed in his father's footsteps as a horse dealer. There was also a daughter, Jeannie, of this marriage who wedded Jim Deed of Wollongong. The fifth child of James Wilson was a boy, named Francis, and at the age of maturity he married Lucy Gentle, whose father operated Gentle's Brickworks in the Newtown area. The sixth child bore the lovely name of Ellen and she married Alfred Kebblewhite. Then came another James Wilson who, after his marriage, went to live in

the country. It is believed that both Francis and James the younger were employed by the Railways Department. The eighth child was named Mary Ann, who later shared her life and fortunes with Isaac Beehag, a young man who lived with his gardening family on the south side of Bay Street, Rockdale.

James Wilson (senior) died on April 20th, 1869 at the age of 70 years and was buried in the Wesleyan Cemetery Bay Street, Rockdale. After his father's death the house and property at West Botany Street was taken over by son David, who was listed as a horse-dealer in 1887 and again in 1900. His son, David, in turn, eventually took over the same property. Trouble with the end gabled walls of the old stone cottage was experienced about 1910, and to overcome their spreading apart Mr. Albert Mathieson installed internal bracing rodding, with screwed ends, running the full width of the building, the outer ends passing through large "Ess" shaped iron braces which, clamped against the outside of both end walls, held them firmly in position.

At this time the horse paddock belonging to the property was located at the rear of the cottage, whilst the extensive market garden, lying southwards towards the creek, was cultivated by Chinese gardeners. These industrious gentlemen occupied a small galvanised-iron shanty on higher ground in the vicinity of the cottage.

The more recent events of the Wilson Household are unknown to the writers, but on March 7th, 1958, the property of $3\frac{3}{4}$ acres was acquired by the Cumberland County Council from the Estate of Lily Maud Loveday for town planning purposes. When this latter Council was dissolved the land and its ancient cottage were destined, so it is believed, to come into the possession of the Rockdale Municipal Council. The gardens, under leasehold conditions, are still operated by Chinese people and are a pleasant picture of neat husbandry. At June 1970, the small stone cottage, then about one hundred and twenty years of age, was in occupation and its fabric maintained in fairly good condition. However, its future seems to be uncertain as the "developers" are casting eyes on the valuable land, and the production of the so essential green foodstuffs for the community at large is, and always has been, the least of their worries. One can only hope that should the former property of James Wilson be developed it will be possible to find a new resting place, perhaps under museum conditions, of, perhaps, Rockdale's oldest settler's home, a true relic of the past.

The authors are indebted to Mrs. Beaman, Mr. C.W. Napper, and Mr. A. Matheson for kindly supplying much of the information contained in this article dealing with the affairs of James Wilson, a farmer of West Botany in the days of yore.

* * *

LYDHAM HALL'S WATER HENS PAINTING

Bettye Ross

For want of a name I call the small ground birds in Neville W. Cayley's painting above the carrara marble fireplace in Lydham Hall's Dining Room, Water Hens. I don't know if they actually are Water Hens for although I have Mr. Cayley's Book "What Bird is That?" I have never taken the time to compare the picture with any of the colour plates in this same book whilst I've been at Lydham Hall. Perhaps someone else can answer the question of "What Bird" is it in this same painting?

However I have found a little detail of Neville W. Cayley from various sources which I think readers will find interesting.

Neville William Cayley was born January 7, 1886 at Yamba, northern New South Wales and inherited his love of art and birds from his father Neville Henry Peniston Cayley who was an English painter who died in Sydney 1903.

By the time of Neville W. Cayley's death on March 17, 1950 (aged 63 years) the above mentioned book was in its 14th edition and today is of great value.

Besides producing "Our Birds", "Our Flowers" and "The Tale of Bluey Wren" he illustrated several of the bird books of naturalist-journalist A.H. Chisholm and painted many colour plates in Dr. G.A. Waterhouse's "What Butterfly is That?" He also wrote and illustrated books on Budgerigars, parrots, Australian finches and fairy wrens. His main medium in painting was water colour.

Many of his native fauna painting appear in Ellis Troughton's books of Australian furred animals.

In 1932 His Majesty King George V was presented with a Neville W. Cayley painting of Australian Splendid Parrakeets by the London Avicultural Society. A fitting gift as King George owned a pair of these beautiful birds and expressed his warm appreciation for the gift.

In 1924 an exhibition of Cayley's bird paintings was held at Tyrrell's Gallery in Sydney. The display was opened by the then Minister for Education (Mr. Bruntnell) who stated that the study of birds was a valuable aid in education and commended Mr. Cayley on his work which would promote the advancement of responsibility of the community toward the protection of these beautiful emblems of flight.

Mr. Neville W. Cayley was closely associated with the Gould League of Bird Lovers, was a member for 11 years of the National Park Trust, past president of the Royal Australasian Ornithologists' Union and a past president and fellow of the Royal Zoological Society of New South Wales.

Cayley's mother (Lois nee Gregory) ran a Guest House at Cronulla where he was a founder of Cronulla Surf Life Saving Club, and he also played a part in the founding of the Surf Life Saving Association of Australia.

Dame Mary Gilmore stated once that he (Neville Cayley) "loves the birds and in the birds, the land of Australia". Cayley instilled vibrancy into each of his paintings of Australian birds and his technique showed their plumage colours in sunlight and shadow. His detailed studies of birds, their nests and their eggs have been used in encyclopaedias or ornithological treatises and never appear lifeless or uninteresting.

His work was likened to a Swedish painter Bruno Liljefors in that he never over asserted the decorative possibilities of birds in his paintings, many of which included those of Australian coasts, ocean, cliff and beach.

As the Sydney Morning Herald in 1939 stated "brilliant scarlet, blue, green and gold, pale, almost transparent in tint, black and white and silver, indeed as many-hued as they are numerous, the birds of Australia as shown by Cayley form the keynote for the protective colouring with which their haunts enfold them. Paintings of birds by Cayley transform any room in which they are placed into an aviary, a garden sanctuary, or a fragment of bushland inhabited by vital, jewelled, blossom-birds."

Lydham Hall, an Australian home, is a fitting one to hold a painting of Australian birdlife by the Australian Neville William Cayley. Take a closer look at this exhibit next time you are there.

Sources:

Sydney Morning Herald various copies
Australian Dictionary of Biography 1891-1939
Cayley, Neville W. - What Bird Is This?
Larkin, Maryanne - Sutherland Shire History to 1939
NSW Births, Deaths, Marriages Index 1788-1918

Some Proverbs to Ponder

- "A fool fishes in the air and hunts in the sea";
- "He that sits with his back to a draft sits with his face to the coffin";
- "Books can never teach the use of books";
- "A good wife makes a good husband"; and
- "A penny is sometimes better spent than spared".

WHAT' S ON.....

FOUNDATION DAY LECTURE

DATE: Monday 15/05/00.

VENUE: Royal Australian Historical Society rooms in
History House, Macquarie Street, Sydney

TIME: 6.30 p.m.

The Friends of the First Government House Site (Inc), cordially invite you to attend their Annual Foundation Day Lecture. This evening is a must for those who enjoy speakers of a professional stature interested in cutting edge research.

This year's lecture will be delivered by Dr Ruth Frappell, MA Hons. on the subject "Women of the First Government House". Dr Frappell always delivers an eloquent, well grounded and heartfelt lecture – not to be missed!

This evening also allows guests the rare opportunity to partake of a generous and delectable supper in the splendid period décor of this, the sole remaining grand gentlemen's residence in this quarter of the city.

COST: Admission is \$12.00 inclusive of lecture and supper

CONTACT: Joan Fairhall on 9546 5555

CHRISTINA STEAD DAY

DATE: Sunday 16/07/00.

VENUE: Lydham Hall, Lydham Avenue Bexley

TIME: 12.00 p.m. – 4.00 p.m.

It is with pleasure that the St George Historical Society celebrates the Annual Christina Stead Memorial day.

We are deeply indebted to Bettye Ross for securing (albeit for a singularly temporary period) one of the only two known videos of the authoress' cinematased novel "For Love Alone".

Bettye went to great effort and undertook many telephone calls to be granted permission to borrow one of the videos. Strict conditions were attached to its release and therefore it WILL NOT be possible to view the tape on another occasion. Opportunity knocks but once – if you wish to see this video then set aside a couple of hours on this day to visit Lydham Hall.

The Committee would appreciate assistance with the manning of the front door, guide work and serving of afternoon teas. Many hands make light work!

COST: Entry and afternoon tea for non-members \$3.00 adults, \$2.00 concession and \$1.50 children. Members a small donation would be gratefully received.

CONTACT: Bettye Ross on 9589 0229 or Joan Fairhall on 9546 5555