

St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

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In the 100th year of Federation

PRESIDENT	Mrs. Bettye Ross	(02) 9589 – 0229
SECRETARY	Mrs. Valda Behag	(02) 9546 – 2819
TREASURER	Mrs. Dora Lenane	(02) 9181 – 2121
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT	Mr. Wesley Fairhall	(02) 9546 – 5555
VICE PRESIDENT	Mr. Bernard Sharah	(02) 0567 – 8989
RESEARCH OFFICERS	Mr. Arthur Ellis Mrs. Pamela Herrick	(02) 9529 – 4879
SOCIAL SECRETARIES	Mrs. Dora Lenane Mrs. Joan Fairhall	(02) 9181 – 2121 (02) 9546 – 5555
PUBLICITY OFFICER	Mrs. Joan Fairhall	(02) 9546 – 5555
BULLETIN EDITOR	Mr. Richard Henke	(02) 9587 – 8307
LYDHAM HALL COMMITTEE	Mrs. Bettye Ross Mrs. Gloria Henke Mr. Bernard Sharah	(02) 9589 – 0229 (02) 9587 – 8307 (02) 0567 – 8989
PUBLIC OFFICER	Mr. Robert McGarn	(02) 9587 – 4469
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 MEETINGS

February 13th “Video’s on Australiana”

At this meeting you can expect to see some fascinating videos on Australia

March 13th “Video’s on Australiana”

At this meeting you can expect to see some fascinating videos on Australia

LYDHAM HALL. 30th OR PEARL ANNIVERSARY

Date: Sunday, February 18th, 2001 12:00 PM - 4:00 PM

Location: Lydham Hall - 18 Lydham Avenue, Bexley, NSW 2207

We are holding the 30th or Pearl Anniversary of Lydham Hall's opening to the public, after Rockdale City Council's purchase of this historic building in October 1970. We have asked Mr. Ron Rathbone OAM to come along and perform the honour, with Miss Bet Otton as our guest, and unveil a Bench Seat on the veranda as a thank you for the her many years of service to Lydham Hall.

COMING UP SOON

APRIL MEETING Talk by Jean Jehan & June Lane on their work Cemetery Records

APRIL 22nd Heritage Week at Lydham Hall

JUNE / JULY 40th, Ruby Anniversary of St. George Historical Society

THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As I write this the month of February 2001 looms up so we have lost one month of our New Year already. I hope you look forward to not only a New Year but also one of interest, excitement and fulfilment.

On Sunday, February 18th, as it states in this Bulletin, we are holding the 30th or Pearl Anniversary of Lydham Hall's opening to the public, after Rockdale City Council's purchase of this historic building in October 1970. We would like you to join the other Members of our Society to celebrate this Special Occasion, especially as we have asked Mr. Ron Rathbone OAM to come along and perform the honour, with Miss Bet Otton as our guest, and unveil a Bench Seat on the veranda as a Thank You for the many years Bet Otton cared for and attended Lydham Hall with such diligence and pleasure.

Miss Bet Otton is no longer able to attend our Society Meetings and if you have not had the opportunity of saying "Goodbye" to her this long overdue occasion will give you that chance.

The afternoon commences 12:00 noon, finishes around 4 PM. and a light afternoon tea will be served immediately after the formalities at 1.30 PM.

Your notice of ability to be present would be appreciated, for catering purposes, but not necessary especially if you won't know if you will be coming until the day, however if you think you can help, even for an hour as a volunteer, knowledge of that would be appreciated. You could well have been one of those who in 1970 / early 1971 held is the restoration of the interior of Lydham Hall and if the present members haven't met you previously or for some time we would love to now.

Besides the above pleasurable afternoon remember this year we will be holding Lydham Hall's Heritage Week on the first Sunday. The date will be April 22nd, again from 12 noon, to 4 PM. Volunteers for this day would also be appreciated.

Then June/July the 40th (Ruby) Anniversary of the formation of St. George Historical Society will be celebrated. This too will be announced later, but if you have some good ideas for the occasion do get in touch with me.

The Lydham Hall Committee is also hoping to have some sort of display around May to celebrate Federation and we would like to see you then too, or if you have any ideas regarding this, advice of same would be appreciated.

My final note is a special thank you to Mr. Heinz Henke who baked the "Wickel Kuchen" cake that we raffled at our Christmas Party in December 2000. The lucky winner was Mr Bernard Sharah.

Have a Happy New Year!

Bettye Ross

THE EDITORS REPORT

It's the start of a new year and I trust that all members are in good health, and for those who are ailing, the society sends its prayers and well wishes for a speedy recovery.

It would be wonderful to see more members at our monthly meetings, please make an effort to come to even one meeting during the year. The guest speakers always deliver an interesting talk on their area of knowledge. I would also suggest members to support Mrs. Dora Lenane and Mrs. Joan Fairhall by attending the outings organised by these ladies.

I offer a very special thanks to Mrs. Bettye Ross and Mrs. Joan Fairhall for their contributions towards this bulletin, without fine articles and information this bulletin would be empty.

WANTED – Any **ARTICLES** of interest, **SUPPLIED BY OTHER MEMBERS**. Have you visited a historic building or annual show which you thought would be suitable for us to arrange a trip to please put pen to paper and tell us about it. I am always eager to hear from you and share your ideas with others.

To get your information to me: Call me on (02) 9587 – 8307 or 0414 – 339 – 510
Mail your news to 27 Waratah Street, Bexley NSW 2207
E-mail me at rwh19475@yahoo.com.au

Kindest regards,
Richard Henke

TALES OF OUR INTREPID TRAVELLER

WESLEY FAIRHALL IN THE WILDS OF AFRICA & SOUTH AMERICA

A reasonable account based on the gleanings from telephone calls (Don't talk – just listen, I can't set up a reverse charge call and my money is running out before my eyes, Please look up the Addresses and Post Codes of these people).

Post Cards to others, as well as myself, gave me more information.

Throughout Africa, varied and spectacular scenery and, of course, the bountiful flora and fauna. A Lion ripped the leg of his blue pants as he was climbing a tree???

Lovely old buildings with magnificent carvings in these established towns. British, Indians and Chinese living well in these towns but natives in abject poverty yet happy natives. Two native workers in different towns have written here and requested help to immigrate or to pursue higher education in their own land.

Americans he has met on his travels have been very friendly and he has addresses to stay in America from Mexico to Canada.

Several have also written here, sending copied of photos of Wesley taken in Africa on their tours.

Seeing two huge Silverback Gorillas with their families in the wild was a great experience, A Warthog took a fancy to him and followed him around.

He had a week on safari with a South-African girl and a girl from Queensland whom he'd met on his tour of Europe three years ago.

Wesley flew from Capetown to Lima, Peru. There he caught up with Richard, his school pal, who had also done the European tour with him. They travelled through Peru and tramped the Inca Trail. Then Bolivia, Met a great group at Christmas but New Year was quiet.

They're in another country now and hope to be in Rio for the Carnival.

Finally, visits to a couple of friends in California, a MUST return visit to the "Huntingdon Gardens."

Back by March 16th, 2001 for a friends wedding on March 18th or he's been warned that they'll have his head.

Nana Mouskouri must have known that he's been a fan since 8 or 9 years of age and he saw her at the Opera House on her last visit. She has timed her only appearance in Sydney for March 25th at the State Theatre and off would come my head if I'd missed out on booking tickets.

Hopefully Wesley will write a first hand report of his travels for our next Journal and MY vacation will be over upon his return.

Source: Mrs Joan Fairhall

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

PRESIDENT'S REPORT FOR YEAR ENDED 30TH JUNE, 1971

I am happy to present the President's Report for the year ended 30th June, 1971.

The year under review was an important one for our Society for two reasons - firstly because we completed our first ten years as a Society, and secondly, because of the significant part we were called upon to play in the Centenary Celebrations of Rockdale Municipal Council.

Our Society had its origin on 16th June, 1961, when 12 people attended a public meeting called by the then Mayor of Rockdale, Alderman T.J. McCarthy, to consider the formation of an Historical Society. The proposal met with the approval of those present and the new Society held its first meeting on 21st July, 1961. There were 16 people present and Mr. Swan was elected the first President.

From those small beginnings our Society has grown over the intervening years and today our membership totals 230. A pleasing feature has always been the good attendance at our meetings and during the past year we averaged 82 people at each monthly gathering. Our record attendance was achieved in February when no less than 103 people were present to hear an address by Mr. R. Stark, Town Clerk of Rockdale - a far cry from the 16 at that first meeting

In accordance with the wishes of members we met in January this year, which was a departure from our normal practice of holding the first meeting in the new year in the following month. The number of members in attendance, totaling 88, justified this decision.

Various outings were arranged to places of historical interest and received the support of members. These have always proved popular, especially since we adopted a practice of traveling by bus which allows members more opportunity to fraternise than is the case when traveling by private cars. It was unfortunate that our proposed out to "Everglades" at Leura had to be cancelled because of bad weather.

During the Eight Hour Holiday Weekend last October, over 40 members went on a three day tour to Wellington and Gulgong. This proved a great success, so much so that plans are now in hand to undertake a similar tour to Braidwood at the same time this year.

With regard to the Centenary Celebrations; many members dressed in period costume and traveled on the Vintage Train from Sydenham to Rockdale. We also arranged an Historical Exhibition in Rockdale Town Hall which proved an outstanding success, so that the hours during which the display was open had to be extended to accommodate all those wishing to attend.

Our Society also undertook to assist with the preparation of Council's Centenary Book, A number of members were engaged on this work for some eighteen months prior to the Celebrations and the result of their efforts may be seen in the book "A Century of Progress". This is a fine publication which has been well received.

To mark the Centenary of the Municipality, Rockdale Council purchased the old home "Lydham Hall" for use as an Historical Museum, and our Society undertook the task of restoring the interior of the building. This involved certain members in sheer physical hard work over a long period and under trying conditions. That the task was performed as well and also completed in time for the official opening is a great tribute to the small band of people who so unselfishly gave of their time and energy to perform a difficult and unfamiliar undertaking.

It also became necessary to raise funds to finance the refurbishing of "Lydham Hall" and a Ladies Fund Raising Committee was formed for this purpose. I cannot speak too highly of the efforts of this small group of members. By their enthusiasm, untiring efforts and incredible desire to help they raised \$2,320 in just eleven months. They staged the North Shore Cavalcade of Fashion in the Town Hall and by this means alone made a net profit of approximately \$400. These ladies are deserving of our admiration and grateful thanks.

We are also greatly indebted to our office bearers for the work they have performed during the year. I would like to mention particularly our Secretary and Assistant Secretary. Coupled with the increase in membership and the Centenary Celebrations, the duties one has asked these ladies to perform have increased considerably during the past year. This means that busy people are called upon to devote more of their limited leisure time in the cause of our Society, and we must never take them for granted for they are deserving of our utmost thanks.

An important feature of our Society has been the opportunity to gather at supper after the meeting and thus get to know fellow members. I would particularly like to thank the ladies on the supper roster, who so kindly and so uncomplainingly undertake this rather tiresome task.

I have always thought that the strength and progress of our Society have been due in no small measure to the ability of members to work and fraternise in a harmonious atmosphere, placing the welfare of the Society before their own interests. I trust that this spirit will continue and that the Society will grow and progress accordingly.

D. Sinclair

Source: Mrs. Bettye Ross
Taken from St George Historical Society Bulletin for May - June 1971

REMINISCENCES WITH A TOUCH OF ST. GEORGE

The following was told to me (Bettye Ross) by two very charming ladies named Jess Chadwick and her sister Georgie some years ago. I'm sure you'll enjoy the manner it was told to me, mainly by Jess, Georgie who had early Alzheimers didn't really have much to say. Unfortunately Jess moved before we could go any further and now has Alzheimers and Georgie has passed on.

As Jess said: "Georgie was born in a Police Station at Mortdale. We lived in the Police Station in the country, but our father wasn't a Policeman!

When we went to the Valley to live there was no Doctor there - this was Newnes Valley or Newnes, a place 40 miles from Lithgow and we went there to live. They had no Doctor. They'd had an old Doctor there but they got rid of him. It didn't matter what you had - whether you had a cut on your foot, a cracked skull or a cold he mixed up the same mixture and used it, so the Miners got fed up and got a woman Doctor, and then none of them would go to her and so she went too. Anyway when Mum was having Georgie we came down this way. The Works had closed down up there but we did go back after Georgie was born at Mortdale.

Dad had worked at the Mines - coal and shale, and when we went there to live, the Policeman was getting married and went into a bigger cottage, so we went to live in the Old Police Station he moved out of. So as I said, we lived in a Police Station, but our Dad wasn't a Policeman. However Mum came down to Mortdale to have Georgie and would not stay with either her relations or Dad's there for fear of upsetting either side of the family, so we took rooms with a woman there. After Georgie was born and we moved out that home became the Mortdale Police Station. So once more we had lived in a Police Station.

When Dad worked at the Mines they would have a Benefit for any of the Miners who had been hurt they'd hold a Concert, all the chairs were put round on the stage and everybody would take a seat and when it was their turn to perform they'd get up recite or whatever then go back and sit down. At each side of the stage were two men done up with black face paint and they told jokes and made much fun. To decorate the stage they used to go into Capertee Valley and get the tree ferns and bring them out, just with a horse and cart and they looked like peacocks, you know with the big tail, and then the tree ferns were placed all round the back of the stage to make it look nice. They had a Bazaar or Fete for the young ones. This was for a Miner who had been badly injured and you could write a letter to someone and put your price on the letter (in case) someone wanted to take it. We were quite young and didn't know anything about boyfriends and that, but there were a couple of boys who we thought looked nice so we wrote, supposedly a letter, just a page, put it in the envelope and we put two pounds on the thing, for Stamp Duty. If someone wanted to read it, they had to pay ten shillings, five shillings or two pounds or whatever for it and all the money raised went to the injured Miner. I'll tell you this Booth for the Post Office, at the Bazaar was well patronised.

I was born in Scotland. I came out here in August, 1913 and we lived at Mortdale for about two years. Then we went up the country. Dad had got a job at Eveleigh but didn't like it and told a couple so that he had known in Scotland. The man was working in the Mines in the Valley.

We'd come out on the "Norseman" which didn't stop till we got to Melbourne. We were supposed to stop at Teneriffe - there was a bad storm and the other ship that left with us limped into Melbourne two days after us and there was nothing left on its deck, from the storm. I met my husband, Robert Chadwick, when I was sixteen and he told me he'd come out here on the "Norseman" when he was nine years old and I thought he was only trying to fool me because I must have told him I'd come out on it, but when I met his parents I found it was true, but we didn't remember each other on the ship.

When we first came to Mortdale we were in Martin Place and Dad said he'd take a walk in the bush on the other side of Boundary Road. You know there were Aborigines round there then. They said "take a big stick" and Dad said "what for?" and they said "snakes and everything". Anyway Dad only went a little way and thought he'd better heed their words and get a stick and as he went to break a sapling a Kookaburra laughed and gave him such a fright. First time he'd heard one.

A friend of Georgie's, Dulcie Marceau went to Minnamurra and I had a girlfriend Rita Smith whose parents had a cottage there. We used to go down for holidays and one night near the Minnamurra River we went to a party and we weren't allowed to drink and didn't want to anyway, and I kept pouring my drink into the Aspidistra plant near the door. When it came time for us to go home, this chap said he'd take Georgie home, as another boy wanted to, but he said "no" he'd take her home and "none of you fellows are taking her home. I am and I go around the road, not across the Golf Course".

So (said Georgie to this) he took me home. I hadn't had a drink it was all gone on the Aspidistra! Every time I pass that house, it's still there by the river, I think of that Aspidistra.

(Jess again) Rita Smith's Uncle Bill went to Scotland and brought a bride back and her maiden name was Jean Smith! Bill and Jean had a son, Billy Smith the St. George Footballer!

How our Dad ever got a job in the Mines we don't know because his family had owned their own boats on the Forth River. He intended to go on boats on Sydney Harbour but two of his brothers drew out at the last minute. They were going to make a combine.

We have another sister Ann, she was born in Grangemouth near the Forth Bridge, Scotland. She was two years older than me.

Anyway Dad's brothers all built boats. Dad intended to go in with his brothers but they pulled out with the Shipping strike that was on and didn't come out here. Our neighbours were Stanners then, and it's Stannard that's on the water there now. They had launches for years. When we were going to come out here we had to wait a long time, possibly six months, because of a Shipping strike and Dad had paid our fares but he had to pay an extra five pounds because by then I'd turned three before we left Scotland, but he was paid the five pounds by Aberdeen Shipping Co. out here. I've still got the Receipt!

So we didn't come out as immigrants, we had our own cabin and everything and Dad got a bunk for a Mrs. Marshall, a woman who was very sick. You see Dad had met this girl and she was crying and when Dad asked her why she said she'd lost her money, a shilling or two, her mother had given her to go and get some brandy, and Dad asked her where her mother was and she said "she's sick in bed" and when our parents went to see her the room she was in was moving and shaking and it was like that all the time. It must have been near the engine or propeller and Dad had a chap on the boat whose girlfriend was on board so he got her shifted and Mrs. Marshall put in her bunk, and she always said Mum and Dad saved her life.

So we came to Penshurst, to Ocean St. and we were with Uncle Jim and he and Dad were on the front verandah the next morning and who should come along the road but this girl - we knew her by now as Cissie and Dad said "where'd you come from" and she said "just down the road". None of us knew where each other were going. They were staying with relations at Penshurst too. These relations did beautiful work, in Stonemasonry. That family stayed in Penshurst a long time.

We came back to Mortdale in 1922 and been down here ever since. We'd gone back to the Valley in 1916. I didn't go to Mortdale school, only when Mum had come down to have Georgie - only for a few weeks that is. Georgie knew the Mortdale area well, she went to school there with Dulcie Marceau (a relation of Bettye Ross's) and I think there are some school photo's with Dulcie in. Georgie went right up to sixth class at Mortdale then went to Hurstville school but still lived at Mortdale.

There were only dirt roads when we went to Mortdale. I remember it burning my feet. There were two little creeks between Broughton and Universal Streets and they had a little wooden bridge over them. We were afraid to cross this bridge when it was foggy.

We had returned to Newnes Valley when Georgie was about a month or two months old and then we came back to Mortdale before Georgie was going to school. Dad had a brother at Mortdale. I started school at Newnes and only had nine months to go. We must have come down at Easter and I couldn't get into Hurstville or Kogarah schools as it was after Christmas and they were full, so I had to go to Arncliffe Domestic Science.

I learnt to cook and sew there. It was a beautiful old home and had just been taken over by the Education Department and was to teach girls to cook, make beds and clean up and everything, and that was all I did for nine months. I turned 14 when I left there. Up at Newnes Valley school only went to sixth class and you just stayed on, because if you wanted to go to First Year you would have to have gone to live in Lithgow.

The school at Arncliffe was where the Bridge goes across the highway, well the school was on the left there and the house was behind that, overlooking Botany Bay. They (Dept. of Education) had taken it over and we used to have to sit in the corridor, where the Laundry was, to beat eggs - but we also learnt stenciling - how to cut a pattern and a little bit of sewing. As regards Arithmetic and Decimals and things like that we didn't do any of those. It was called a Domestic Science and I think it must have been the first year it started, when I started there after the Easter.

I went into tailoring. Only a little place. There was one cutter and he was the greaser and everything. I was there for years. They were a Jewish family. Then I went to another place as big as a picture-show, a factory and I couldn't stand it. I couldn't keep up with the work. Where I'd been before we did everything properly - our suits were fitted not "off the peg" sort of thing. That was the time of the depression and this new place went "bung". I finished working for the Dentist's wife, in the house, in Penshurst.

When I was at the factory, I'd been crying and I told Dad I couldn't keep up because all they were giving me I'd always been taught to do things properly - not a stitch showing inside the pockets - and here we went straight though, not like before where we either went on the table to do the hand sewing right round the lapels or round the coat or we could go on the machine and do the machine work. There were only four girls - Daisy, Nellie, Mrs. King and myself and there always had to be two of us on the table.

In those days you had to learn to sew. You made your own clothes. We'd go to town Saturday morning and buy some material and we'd wear it that night.

Georgie became a Milliner and I think she was only at the one place all her life and Annie worked in Handbags. We all used our hands.

I married Bob in 1932 (he was a Moulder by trade) and I just worked in the mornings for Mrs., C.... the Dentist's wife. Our only child Rob was born ten years later.

Bob was in St. George Athletics and had a lot of trophies for running and tennis. I had some for tennis too and Bob built a China Cabinet - a glass case - on the wall to hold them.

My Mum died in 1958 and Dad died 1969, both at Mortdale.

Source: Mrs. Bettye Ross