

# St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

MARCH – APRIL 2002 EDITION



St. Georges Day

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Meetings are held 8:00 PM the 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.

## MARCH - APRIL EVENTS AGENDA

### MONTHLY GUEST SPEAKERS

- Tuesday March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2002** Wesley Fairhall will bring a display of Carnivorous (Insect Eating). Plants and speak about their care, culture & captivating appeal. Come along and see both the weird and enchanting.
- Tuesday April 9<sup>th</sup> 2002** Judith Dunne, well known historian and authoress from Parramatta, will wet our appetites for a forthcoming bus trip to Parramatta. We will visit sites of historical interest, as well as hear about those others no longer in existence or unable to be viewed on the day.

### THINGS TO NOTE

- April 20<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> 2002** **Heritage Week** – Listed purely to satisfy your interest
- Tuesday April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2002** **St Georges Day**, As on the Front Cover – See Articles inside about St Georges Day, its Flag and England's Red Red Rose

### UP AND COMING EVENT

- Sunday, April 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002** **Heritage Festival Open Day**
- This festival will be held at Lydham Hall between 12:00 noon & 4:00 pm  
18 Lydham Avenue, Rockdale Phone (02) 9567-4259
- Bridging the Divide with Ages – young and old, childhood to maturity.  
Enjoy Activities for all ages.
- \$4.00 – Light Refreshments will be served.

## **The Editor & Vice President's Report**

### **OUR RECENT BUS TRIP TO KIAMA**

We started out early on a very pleasant Monday morning, March 25<sup>th</sup> from Hurstville in the St George Community Bus with a very obliging driver called Tony. There were 17 people in our group, and we are happy to say that 4 of these people were visitors. Peter, one of the visitors, won our raffle for the day.

Taking the Coast Road down through the National Park we witnessed some of the devastation left from the December Bushfires, amazingly regrowth has already started in the bushlands, to restore the area to its natural splendour.

Our first stop was at very beautiful and picturesque Stanwell Tops, where we had Morning Tea.

At Stanwell Tops we saw a Monument erected in tribute of Lawrence Hargraves due to his experiments in 1893 at Stanwell Park with Box Kites. This area is sometimes called "The Birthplace of Flight".

From here we journeyed to a suburb of Wollongong called Berkeley where we saw the Nan Tien Buddhist Temple, which opened in 1995. It is the largest in the Southern Hemisphere. Wollongong was chosen as the site for the Temple because of the ideal location of Mt Keira and Mt Kembla in relation to the site. Nan Tien translated into English is "The Paradise of the Southern Hemisphere" and upon arrival we were to discover that the Temple was not open on Mondays.

Upon our arrival at Kiama we went to view the blowhole, which was not very active on this day.

We then proceeded to Kiama Harbour Fish Restraunt and surrounding eateries and had a most enjoyable Lunch.

On our return trip we travelled through the Jamberoo Valley where the grass grows green, the sun shines bright, the cows are plentiful and it seems so very peaceful.

All enjoyed the day and many thanks must be given to Dora Lenane and Joan Fairhall for arranging such a pleasant outing for us and to Tony for his exceptional driving on this day and for bringing us home safely.

Source: Richard Henke

### **Skerricks**

- Congratulations to Mrs. Bettye Ross on her special Birthday on March 30<sup>th</sup> and we hope you had a lovely day with your family and that there are many more of them.
- Happy Belated Birthday to The Bard William Shakespeare. The actual date of William Shakespeare's birth is uncertain but he was born in Henley Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire and was baptised on April 26<sup>th</sup>, 1564 and he died on April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1616. Without his contributions, both dramatic and romantic, we would have missed out on many splendid pieces of literature.
- Lydham Hall has recently had donated a Treddle Organ, which was given to us by Mrs. Mary Hubbard. It belonged to her mother Mrs. Alice Dimmack. The organ was built in England in 1870.
- 1860 The Tower of London April Fools' joke.

In March 1860 a large number of Londoners received in the mail printed invitations which read:

"Tower of London, The White Gate – Admit the Bearer and Friend to view the Annual Ceremony of Washing the White Lions, on Sunday April 1st, 1860. The trick was highly successful. There is no White Gate: cabs were seen all day driving around the Tower looking in vain for it.

- Sadly we have all heard the report of the death of the Queen Mother on March 31<sup>st</sup> 2002. She died peacefully in her sleep after having reached the proud age of 101 years. She will always be remembered for her humour and dignity.



*William  
Shakespeare's  
Home*

*Located in  
Henley Street  
Stafford-upon-Avon  
Warwickshire*





# Lest We Forget



In memory of those who fought for our freedom we especially remember them on Anzac Day  
April 25<sup>th</sup> each year, when we pay tribute to these people for what they did for us.  
Nothing speaks of their efforts more than the written word below and from this passage comes  
THE ODE which is recited each day at any RSL club in remembrance of their efforts.

## For The Fallen

With proud thanksgiving, a mother for her children,  
England mourns for her dead across the sea.  
Flesh of her flesh they were, spirit of her spirit,  
Fallen in the cause of the free.

Solemn the drums thrill: Death august and royal  
Sings sorrow up into immortal spheres.  
There is music in the midst of desolation  
And a glory that shines upon our tears.

**They went with songs to the battle, they were young,  
Straight of limb, true of eye, steady and aglow.  
They were staunch to the end against odds uncounted,  
They fell with their faces to the foe.**

**They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old;  
Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn.  
At the going down of the sun and in the morning  
We will remember them.**

They mingle not with their laughing comrades again;  
They sit no more at familiar tables at home;  
They have no lot in our labour of the day-time;  
They sleep beyond England's foam.

But where our desires are and our hopes profound,  
Felt as a well-spring that is hidden from sight,  
To the innermost heart of their own land they are known  
As the stars are known to the Night;

As the stars that shall be bright when we are dust,  
Moving in marches upon the heavenly plain,  
As the stars that are starry in the time of our darkness,  
To the end, to the end, they remain.

**Laurence Binyon (1869-1943)**

## St. George's Day, its Flag and England's Red, Red Rose

A Patron (*patronus*) according to Roman law was a protector or defender. The Patron Saint of England is St. George or Edward the Confessor. England's symbol is the red rose.

War of the Roses (1455-1485) was the name given to the struggle, between the noble house of York, whose badge was a white rose, and the noble house of Lancaster, whose badge was a red rose, for the throne of England. Many attempts were made to place Yorkist pretenders on the throne during this civil battle but the Lancastrian King Henry VII (Henry Tudor) succeeded and thereabouts united the houses of York and Lancaster.

William Shakespeare immortalised the quarrel which led to the War of the Roses in *Henry VI, Part I* when in the garden of the Inner Temple, the supporters of Richard Plantagenet and the Earl of Somerset were required to pluck either a red rose or a white rose to show which cause they supported. Roses still bloom each summer in the Inner Temple Garden.

Doesn't this bring to mind St. George District's colours of Red / White?

William Shakespeare was born April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1564 (baptized three days later) St. George's Day. He died April 23<sup>rd</sup>, 1616 - again St. George's Day!

Only one Church of pre 18<sup>th</sup> century London bears the Patron Saint's name and that is St. George The Martyr, Southwark. The east window shows the true tale of St. George. The scene is of the early Christian tortured to death in AD 303 by the Roman Emperor's, Diocletian, men. Henry V prayed at this Southwark Church for success at Agincourt.

There is a romantic legend also of St. George which tells the tale of King Silene's much loved and beautiful daughter about to be sacrificed to appease a dragon who was devouring all the villagers. St. George riding his white horse slew the dragon and saved the maiden's life. This myth was adopted by the Crusaders as a morale booster, thus the allegory of St. George and the Dragon, triumph of Good over Evil.

The legend was brought to the fore again when Edward III's men flew the St. George Flag at Calais when defeating the French.

The Order of the Garter was raised when Edward III retrieved the Countess of Salisbury's dark blue garter which slipped from her apparel, to the laughter of those of an ungentlemanly nature. To cover the lady's embarrassment the King placed the velvet garter on his own leg and said "I will make of this ere long the most honourable garter that was ever worn" and so it was dedicated "in memorial of the Blessed Martyr Saint George" and so the members of this honourable order today still wear the garter as part of the traditional dark-blue dress with its collar to which is attached the symbol of St. George and the Dragon, when celebrating the birthday of the Patron Saint at Windsor Castle's St. George's Chapel.

The procession for St. George's Day, long ago dispensed with, was revived by King George VI in 1948, but how many Englishmen today know of their Flag of St. George?

Sources:           Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc. 1988  
                      Hudson R., "The English Way of Life" - This England Magazine, Spring 1997  
                      New Illustrated Columbia Encyclopedia, University Press, 1979





## THE HOMESTEAD

The Homestead is the oldest residence in Bankstown, built in 1837, and has been given a classified listing by the National Trust. It stands on the rising ground above Henry Lawson Drive in Lionel Street, and was the home of the Johnston family until 1911.

From its wide verandahs there is a vista of the pleasant green reserve of Lake Gillawarna on the banks of Prospect Creek, where a notice board, erected by Bankstown Municipal Council and Bankstown Historical Society, marks the site of the first Johnston home. A few oak trees of the avenue that once lined the carriageway leading to the house can still be seen.

On April 6th, 1798, Major George Johnston of the New South Wales Corps was granted 170 acres at Banks' Town and here he built a farmhouse, naming it George's Hall. No doubt he chose the name in honour of his sovereign, King George II I, and gradually the name extended to the modern suburb. George's Hall was the unofficial Government Headquarters for the Georges River district, at which the Military Detachment of a sergeant and four privates was stationed in 1801, and where convicts reported to be counted at the muster, or census taking, in 1809.

Governor Bligh visited and took tea with Major Johnston on October 12th, 1806, but would not have been so pleased to see him on January 26th, 1808, when Johnston led the soldiers of the New South Wales Corps to Government House in the "Rum Rebellion".

George's Hall was sketched by the convict artist, Joseph Lycett, in 1819.

The main Johnston home was at Annandale, but Johnston's wife, Esther Julian, probably lived here while her husband was absent in England between 1800 and 1802. Then, the eldest son, George Johnston junior, who had been born in Sydney in 1790, lived at George's Hall to manage the estates belonging to himself, his father and his mother in the district, including a farm called "East Hills", and land that is now the modern day suburbs of Revesby and Panania. A young man of great promise, he was killed by a riding accident at the Macarthur's Camden home in 1820. His brother David, the third son, was confirmed as his heir and took over the estates at George's River.

Esther Johnston was widowed in 1823, and after her son Robert was given the management of the Annandale estate, came to live with her son David at George's Hall in 1830. Here she stayed until her death in 1846.

The Homestead is the second home of the Johnston family, built high on a knoll out of reach of the floodwaters that so often inundated the lower ground near the river. Family tradition put the date of

building The Homestead at about two years after the building of Lansdowne Bridge, and this was proved correct by an entry in the diary of the Reverend Richard Taylor, Rector of St. Luke's, Liverpool, who often visited the Johnstons at George's Hall and the Westons at Horsley. (Mrs. Weston was Blanche, youngest daughter of Major Johnston, and David's sister. ) His diary for January 26th, 1837 records:

“Intending to visit the mouth of the Cook River and Botany Bay to see what could be done for the spiritual welfare of those settled in those parts, I set off after breakfast, and first called upon Mr. David Johnston whose estate is situated at the junction of the Georges River and Lansdowne Bridge, the house is about two miles from the road, the approach to which, through the bush, is rather more interesting than a ride through the bush generally is, it is a neat house having an excellent garden coming down to the river; he having recently married, they appear to be well educated people, he is erecting a new house on a more commanding site.”

David Johnston had married Selina Willey at St. Luke's, Liverpool, on February 10th, 1836, so it seems probable that sometime during 1837 David Johnston and his wife moved into their new home. Perhaps their first child, Esther Emily, was born there in February 1838. Their youngest son, Arthur Alfred, born December 2nd, 1854, lived in The Homestead until his death in 1907, making three generations of the Johnston family to have lived in Bankstown.

The Homestead was sold to Mr. Ashcroft, whose name is remembered in a nearby street, and the estate gradually subdivided. There were several private owners until 1949, when it was purchased by the After Care Association of New South Wales.

The house is not open to the public, but occasionally, with the kind permission of the Association, and the co-operation of the Matron, Bankstown Historical Society is able to organise an Open Day to give visitors the privilege of inspecting the main reception rooms, an attic bedroom and the cellars of the gracious old house.

### **Architectural Features of the Homestead**

The name of the designer is unknown, but he left a modest building, of elegance and charm, with fine detailing. Many alterations have taken place, but do not obscure the line of the original building. The timber columns and verandah railings are modern replacements, and terracotta tiles have replaced the wooden shingles.

Inside, the cedar panelling is intact, mellowed with the years, as are the architraves and door trims. The door locks and hinges are of interest. Even the cupboards in the pantry (not open to the public), are made of cedar.

The steep and narrow staircase leading to the attic bedrooms was added later. One attic has been furnished by the Bankstown Historical Society in late Victorian style. Under the house is a large cellar with brick arches and barred windows. The huge windows that support the building show the marks of the adze, and square, handmade nails can be seen.

At the rear of the house, large sandstone slabs are all that remains of a dairy and other now demolished outbuildings. The coach house and stables, also demolished, were still standing in 1923, for a curve in the otherwise straight Beale Street shows how the street was aligned to avoid them when part of the estate was subdivided as Deepwater Estate.

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