

St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL
MARCH-APRIL 2003 EDITION

Heritage Festival 2003

Freshwater-Water, Waves and Wanderings



*Celebrated at Lydham Hall
Sunday the 6th and 13th April, 2003.*

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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

EVENTS

Apr 6th & 13th Heritage Festival 2003

St. George Historical Society Inc. & Lydham Hall Committee will celebrate this event. Our theme being “Beautiful Botany Bay: Beginnings and Continuations”.

An illustrated and textual display of salt and fresh water tributaries of 1770 to 2003 of Botany Bay and surrounding area.

12pm – 4pm, Light Refreshments served. Adults \$4, Concessions \$3, Children \$2
Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Avenue, Bexley Phone: (02) 9567-4259

May 9th BUS TRIP – Auburn Botanical Gardens & Fairfax Printers Chullora

You are to meet at 9:00 am at Ormonde Parade, Hurstville

Bring a picnic lunch to be eaten at the Auburn Gardens, it is also believed that there is a Kiosk in the gardens, after which we will proceed to Fairfax Printers, where we will be taken on a tour of the building.

Cost \$20.00

For further information contact Joan (02) 9546-5555 or Dora (02) 9181-2121



VALE



We extend our sympathies to Mrs. Karyn Ericsson and her family upon the death of her Mother, Mrs. Leonie Wright.

EDITORS REPORT

It gives us great pleasure to report that our 32nd Anniversary of Lydham Hall on February 23rd, was a great success. We included upon this anniversary, the dedication of "The Eardley Room", in memory of Gifford and Eileen Eardley and the work they had done for our Society, which covered many facets including, the writing and sketching of Historical Books, donation of many historical items to be displayed at Lydham Hall. Mr. Ron Rathbone O.A.M. kindly performed this dedication.

Dora's tour of the Sydney Hospital Museum on March 26th was also an enjoyable event and was attended by 11 persons.

Our president Mr. Bernard Sharah, conducted a Historic Walk of Arncliffe on March 30th and was attended by 43 people, after which there were refreshments served at St. Francis Xaviers Church in Arncliffe for which we thank the church for allowing us to use their premises. We believe that the people attending were reluctant to leave and stated that they would look forward to any future historic walks. Many thanks Bernard for your hard work. We are also delighted with the fact that many of our historical books were sold at this event. Congratulations Bernard.

It would be nice to see more people volunteering to help at Historical Society events.

GIFFORD AND EILEEN EARDLEY

Gifford and Eileen Eardley joined the St. George Historical Society shortly after its formation in 1962 and soon became two of its most enthusiastic members. Gifford was a romantic who loved the environment, steam locomotives and the ritualism of the Masonic Order and the High Church Anglican Church. He was also a talented artist and many of his drawings are the only record we now have of early buildings and rural scenes in the area.

He was a prolific recorder of local history and illustrated his writings with his own sketches. He was a warm hearted, attractive even charismatic man and under his Presidency the St. George Historical Society grew to become one of the largest local historical societies in the State.

His wife, Eileen was a perfect foil. Strong minded, practical and down to earth, yet with a most appealing sense of humour, she was a lady who made things happen. When the Society was desperate for a Secretary, she took on the task as well as that of Bulletin Editor ensuring that there was an interesting speaker at each meeting and that each issue of the Bulletin contained new information on the history of the district.

She remained Secretary after her husband's death and it was not until she was in her mid eighties that she finally relinquished the position.

Gifford and Eileen Eardley were a unique couple who loved the district in which they spent their entire lives and gave so much of their time and energy to recording its history. They were an inspiration to all who knew them.

When Lydham Hall was purchased by Rockdale Council in 1971, they gave many of the items and artefacts still displayed in the house.

RON RATHBONE

February 2003

MEMORIES OF THE WAR TIME YEARS 1940 to 1945 IN ARNCLIFFE.

Photographs in newspapers of battle weary soldiers. War scenes in newsreels. Uniformed men in the streets. Blackout paper on windows. Complaints about shortages of goods. Ladies knitting khaki socks. These and many more childhood memories spring to mind, despite the passage of years. Like others, we had an air-raid shelter in the backyard, which was really just a deep trench covered by pieces of galvanised iron. Gas masks and tinned food were stored under the house 'in case of attack'.

Sometime during 1941, my father a returned soldier from World War 1, volunteered as an air-raid warden. We lived in Hill Street and had a yellow plate attached to our front fence with WARDEN in black lettering. It was his job to go out at night and check there were no lights in the neighbourhood. Some nights our family would walk to the top of the Duff Street hill and look across to Mascot aerodrome to see the search-lights beam through the sky looking for any enemy aircraft.

With the introduction of 'Ration books' for many goods such as - tea, butter, sugar, clothing etc. I recall going to an allotment of land with tin sheds on it in Bardwell Road, near Shepherd's Dairy, where my mother queued to receive our ration books. One day I found four butter coupons on the footpath which I took home to my delighted mother. She made a concoction of hot water, gelatine and butter to make the spread go further. Our friend and near neighbour, Mrs Eileen Eardley stated once that as soon as the War was over, she was going to have bread with butter thickly spread on it.

As the manufacture and import of toys ceased, I had some rag dolls, made by my mother and did not have a teddy bear until 1947, as these were imported from England. My father, a carpenter by trade, made many beautiful toys from wood. I still have a child's table and chair he made one Christmas.

My first school was at Wilson Road in 1942 which comprised as I recall of three school rooms. The playground was thick brown dust in dry weather, and mud in the wet. The Rev. Pitt-Owen came one day a week for Scripture class. Opposite the school on the corner of Fairview Street was Nurse Robinson's private maternity hospital, where I was born in 1937. My next school was Arncliffe West in Loftus Street which I attended from 1944-5. The school at that time had underground air-raid shelters in the grounds, but fortunately we never had to use them.

Among the shops in Belmore Street, Arncliffe, was Wilson's 'The Towel King' selling ladies wear and haberdashery. A similar store was Clark's (next to the Commonwealth Bank) which had an overhead wire system to convey sales docket and money in a small container, to a central cashier. Dunstan's Hardware was next door to Mr Spora the Chemist on the corner. Wollongong Road had many small shops strung along its length. One where we shopped was T.J.McGill the grocer, on the corner of Dowling Street. Remembered also were the 'clothes-prop' men and the 'rabbito' who came calling. Colourful characters who have long since disappeared from Arncliffe suburban life.

Marjorie C.Mercer

NOTE...

This was presented to us by our Society Member, Mrs Betty Williams, who was the sister of Majorie C Mercer. Betty gave her assistance to her sister in writing this article by remembering the names of the storekeepers.

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

*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*

As I look out of the window of my Somme gite, I see the tiny headstones of Peake Wood Cemetery in the distance, surrounded by the same ploughed fields where the men who are buried in the cemetery lost their lives. However, in 1916 the ploughed fields were the result of incessant shell-fire. This small cemetery of 101 graves is one of the few original battlefield cemeteries that remained after reorganisation and work carried out in the 1920s. A large number became 'concentration' cemeteries when many thousands were re-interred from small burial plots. Although a large number of plots were moved to larger cemeteries, many people are surprised to learn that, today, there are more than 2,900 British military cemeteries in France and 621 in Belgium.

When you enter one of these cemeteries for the first time, two things immediately spring to mind: the uniformity of the headstones and the immaculate upkeep of the grounds. When the original wooden crosses were being replaced by stone headstones, it was agreed that, regardless of rank, colour or religion, a standard sized headstone would be used. It would be inscribed with the regimental badge, the rank, number and name of the deceased, the name of the regiment, a religious symbol and, if requested, a brief inscription at the base from the family. Each cemetery also has a stone Cross of Sacrifice and a Stone of Remembrance engraved with the words "Their name liveth for evermore". The upkeep of the lawns and borders are the result of the wonderful work carried out by the gardeners of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission and always give the impression that the grass has been cut only a few hours earlier. A number of these gardeners are related to the original army personnel who stayed after the First World War and married locally.

There are a total of 459,296 named Commonwealth war graves in France and Belgium but there are also 320,153 names on memorials of men who have no known graves. The Menin Gate in Ieper (formerly Ypres) has over 54,000 names commemorated on its panels. Every night at 8.00 pm, the traffic through the gate is halted and the sound of The Last Post is hauntingly carried through the air. It is played by the buglers of the local fire brigade in remembrance of the men who made the ultimate sacrifice. After the memorial was designed, it was found that it would not be large enough to accommodate all of the names, so another memorial was built about five miles away at Tyne Cot which, with 11,900 burials, is the largest Commonwealth cemetery in the world. The panels of the memorial are inscribed with 34,888 names.

The Largest British memorial is at Thiepval, in the Somme area of France. Designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens and standing some 45 metres high, the memorial was inaugurated by the Prince of Wales in 1932. On its 16 pillars are the names of more than 73,000 men with no known grave who lost their lives on the Somme. Beside the memorial is a special cemetery which contains 300 British and 300 French graves. Each year on 1 July, there is a service held at the memorial attended by dignitaries from all over the world.

On each of my trips to France, I visit Dud Corner Cemetery which has the Loss Memorial to the Missing inscribed on three surrounding walls. The panels record the name of 20,692 men who were lost forever at the Battle of Loos in September and October 1915. The special visit is to pay homage to my two great uncles who lost their lives within three days of each other and are commemorated on the panel of the Welch Regiment. On an adjoining panel is the name of Captain Fergus Bowes-Lyon, the Queen Mother's brother, who was killed in action. War touches everyone.

For the past twelve years, my hobby and intense interest in the First World War has taken me over to France and Belgium on numerous occasions. This has led me into research work and appearances on BBC, ITV and Sky Television as well as Radio Four, Radio Wales and over 65 interviews on local radio throughout the UK.

My greatest satisfaction comes from visiting cemeteries and memorials on behalf of people all over the world and taking photographs of their relatives' headstones. The vast majority would never be able to visit the graves and I like to think I am an ambassador for their families, visiting graves that have never had a personal visit. The many letters of thanks I receive appear to support this.

For an information sheet, please send an SAE: or IRC to -

Brian V Thomas, 38 Meadow Vale, DALE, Haverfordwest, SA62 3RH. Wales (Tel No: 01646 636756)

Source: Betty Ross

A CELEBRATION OF THE LIFE OF STELLA JOYCE ERICSSON

Stella was born in Christchurch New Zealand on the 21st April 1912, almost a century ago. She has seen the dawning of the 21st century, lived through two world wars, the great depression and endless other tragedies and witnessed time spanning from the horse and buggy days to the modern travel of the jet age.

Stella was one of six siblings all of who were adopted and fostered. Her adopting parents Alf and Annie Godfrey were Australian from the Riverina District of New South Wales. Alf was a shearing contractor employing a team of shearers Annie had a background of bush nursing so she set up a nursing home in Cootamundra to take care of sick and terminally ill boarders in a better environment than was available in isolated rural areas in those days.

Annie's bridesmaid was her best friend. She was involved in a horse and buggy accident which killed her and her husband. They left three teenage children Jean, Darcy and Ada Mitchell who Annie and Alf fostered. They were known as the Mitchell Mob. Times were not easy then with no Social Security or child support so any income Annie derived from the nursing home was greatly needed to support the extra family. Stella and the three Mitchell siblings were expected to work tirelessly to earn their keep and to learn life's principles. Annie ruled with an iron rod. Stella said later in life that nothing was free in the Godfrey house-one had to work for one's meals.

Alf adored Stella all of his life. Annie had been married previously and had a daughter Sylvia who was nine years older than Stella and had little in common with Stella. Sylvia rarely visited her mother. Her natural father financed her upbringing paying for her education at boarding school, her wedding and all her other needs. This caused a great deal of anguish to Annie who then bullied Stella and the Mitchell children into working for their keep.

Alf was fortunate to be paid a cash wage and keep and would bring home a couple of sheep as part of his earnings.

Annie kept house for her family and seven house guests. She also attended to their medical needs. She was well respected in the district and honored by doctors and politicians because there was no other place like it. Annie's recipes and bush medicines are written in the archives of the Royal Flying Doctor Service in Alice Springs.

In 1914 Australia and New Zealand shared a time when adoptions were conducted in total secrecy. Stella's birth name and natural parents' names were not revealed. At the age of sixteen during a family squabble, Stella found out her birth name to be Joyce Tranter Garland. Her adoptive name was Stella Joyce Godfrey. It took almost a life-time to establish her birth family connections and to learn that she was one of six children-Norman, Netta, Stella, Gladys, Letitia and Ellen. Ellen now 81 years of age is called Nellie. She still resides in New Zealand and sadly Stella only met Nellie in 1998 when she attended the 150 year celebrations in Dunedin of the arrival of the first Scottish settlers to New Zealand on the ship "Philip Laing". Stella was descended from the Ferguson family on this ship. Her ancestors were also part of the original Canterbury settlers and Stella attended the 150 year celebrations in Christchurch in 2000 for this occasion. On this trip, she was presented to the Governor-General of New Zealand as the senior member of the Garland family.

Through the intervention of the children's aunt; Gladys Campagnolo, Stella's whereabouts were traced. Aunt Gladys was able to put the children of her dead sister Ellen in touch with each other. Over the years Stella met Netta and Gladys her sisters and they shared a wonderful friendship. As Netta's daughter, I have all my life known Aunt Stella as my aunt and dear friend She had grown into the role of Matriach of her Garland heritage where she has become the much-loved Aunt to us all. We have called on her strength and wisdom to support us in our joys and grief. She was always there for us. Stella became the Doyen of The Garland Girls as she referred to us girls. When being spoken to she would always say "It's Aunt Stella to you" if we referred to her only as Stella. To all her Garland family she will always be the aunt every family should have. I will always remember her for her style and how she would say "Get on with it" So I will.

Stella married Noel Ericsson in Hay on the 18th of April 1933, a marriage that lasted 54 years and produced two sons. Noel chose Radio Science as his career and worked on ships at the start of their marriage, being away for three months at a time. The home port was somewhere between Port Macquarie in the East and Perth in the West. Stella would travel and meet the ship where ever and whenever it was in port be it Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide.

During the Second World War, Noel was employed as a weather lookout spokesman and was contracted to live on Lord Howe Island. He would have to report any Japanese submarines or ships etc and report the weather at the start of the Australian day relayed by Morse code. Later Noel managed the flying boat base in Sydney which involved Newcastle (Lake Macquarie), Lord Howe Island and Norfolk Island. The greater part of his career was spent at Mascot Airport as an Air Traffic Controller. During this time aircraft were slower and smaller. He could talk personally to them and have them take off and land safely.

Noel devised ways of making air travel safe by stacking planes, keep them circling the airport and then calling them to land one by one. He produced safety procedures for plane takeoffs within Australia that are still used today even with the huge advances in electronics and radar. His main passion was amateur (HAM) radio and to his final days he was teaching blind students to send and receive Morse code. All over the years and through Noels career moves, Stella, "His GAL", was at his side.

Following Noel's death Stella resumed her love affair with travelling. She loved to travel by any mode of transport but most especially by train. Throughout her lifetime her journeys saw her travel across Europe on the Orient Express; through the highlands of Scotland on the Flying Scotsman; across Australia over the Nullarbor Plain on the old Puffing Billy- then later the Indian Pacific Express- and from Adelaide to The Alice on The Ghan to name just a few.

Her passion for reading and her involvement with gardening and writing clubs, theatre and historical societies provided her with not only a diverse understanding and keen interest in the ways of the world but also a large number of friendships many of which lasted for more than six decades.

Stella is survived by her two sons, Godfrey and Michael, daughters in law Karen and Beverley and two grand daughters Simone and Lisa. Ben her Grand son predeceased her as a teenager. She was extremely proud of her family.

Stella wanted it known that she did it "HER WAY"

SOURCE: Eulogy read by Teresa Adams, at Stella Ericsson's Funeral. Teresa is Stella's Niece

