

St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER - OCTOBER 2003 EDITION

1849

1924



Francis Dickin

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AUDITOR	Mrs. L. Thompson	

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.

SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER EVENTS AGENDA

EVENTS

Sept 9th

MEETING:

Authoress Beverley Earnshaw is our guest speaker. The topic being books she has written and one presently being researched on, fascinating true stories of convict life including “ The Rocky Point Road Gang”

Supper to follow.

Oct 17th

BUS OUTING

\$ 20.00

An outing with a difference, see how some of our Historic Buildings have changed.

After morning tea at historic St. Peters Church – Sydenham, we will criss cross some of our inner Suburbs.

You will be amazed at the changes like Camperdown Children’s Hospital, Power House at Pymont etc.

Lunch at Birkenhead Point. This is the last trip for this year.

Meet at 9am Ormonde Parade Hurstville. Morning tea provided.

Enquiries and Bookings. Contact Dora Lenane 9181-2121 or Joan Fairhall 9546-5555.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

In the April/May Issue of the Bulletin I gave a summation of the past year's achievements and activities. Rather than repeat myself I will simply add to what has already been said.

In the previous report I mentioned 'challenges'. The most immediate of these is financial and the reason for that is the rise in insurance costs. This is a problem with which all community organisations are having to contend. However, that doesn't make it any easier. We have to boost our funds if we are to afford these exorbitant costs. This may mean a rise in membership fees. If not, we will have to raise the funds in other ways - but the membership fees are very low compared to other societies.

We also need more members, and younger ones at that. To that we need to raise the profile of the Society so that the wider community is aware of our existence. It is also important to be seen to stand for something. That 'something' in my view should be the preservation and protection of our local history, and heritage. In the past we have not been involved as we could have been in the defence of our built heritage. I would like to see that change.

We also have to be more adaptable to change. Big changes are in the wind. The changing nature of the Rockdale is now very apparent. High rise apartment blocks are being constructed in many locations throughout the area. Development on this scale places increased pressure on historic areas and buildings. It also brings more people, and much more congested living conditions, but maybe also a change in demographics. Will they be interested in local history? That remains to be seen. We must be optimistic.

But by far the biggest change being mooted is amalgamation of Rockdale, Kogarah and Hurstville areas into one St George City Council. In some ways such an amalgamation has strong appeal. The present boundaries are quite arbitrary and irrational in places. One side of Kogarah is administered by Kogarah City Council, the other by Rockdale.

The same thing applies to Hurstville. The main commercial side of the station is managed by Hurstville City Council, the Ormonde Parade side by Kogarah. But a St George Council would be huge! That's the drawback.

The point is, if the amalgamation goes ahead what is the future for our society? These are some of the factors we will have to consider and prepare for.

Thank you again to all the members for their efforts over the past financial year.

Kind regards,
Bernard Sharah

5/8 Louisa Street,
Oatley, NSW 2223
29/6/03

Management Committee
Lydham Hall

Dear Mrs. Ross,

After talking to you today I would like to inform you that the Silk Patchwork Quilt on loan from the Upton Family can now be accepted as permanent property of the Lydham Hall historical exhibit.

It is a lovely piece of work and will give more pleasure to your visitors than being in a box at home. It is great to see it is so well looked after and one of your treasures.

Please find enclosed \$50 towards upkeep of Lydham Hall.

Sincerely,

Kath Upton

The Mystery of the Photo Album.

A lady who visited Lydham Hall told us about a very old photo album she had in her possession, it had been found on a garbage tip and was in a fairly delicate condition.

She has since handed it over to Lydham Hall.

Written on the inside leaf was, Mrs. Glover, but the name Glover is not mentioned against any of the photos, the following names are mentioned:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| * Mother and Les. or Jes | * To dear Auntie and Uncle George from little Arthur. |
| * Grandfather Forbes | * Lotty and Milly Westhoff |
| * Uncle ?????? | * ????? Larry |
| * Sam Forbes | * Aunty Hannah Forbes |
| * Will Forbes | * Albert Forbes |
| * ??? Aunt May and Uncle George Scurr | * Minnie Forbes |
| * May Scurr. Jany. 21,1893. | * Fred Westhoft |
| * Violet | * W. G. M. Forbes Snr. And Mrs. Forbes |
| * Aunty May Scurr | |

Some research has been done by Mrs. Bettye Ross our Research Officer and she has found the following information:

- Harry Westhoff married Jessie Riggs in 1894 at Newtown, one of their children
- Roma aged 2 yrs. died 1909. Death registered Rockdale.
- Nowell William Alfred Westhoff married 1938 to Hilda Mary Bradford at Hurstville.
- Mary Amelia Forbes married 1875 at Sydney to George Henry Scurr. wedding photo mentioned in album as George and May.
- George Henry Scurr was born 1854 to William. J. C. Scurr who married Jane Crawford 1853 at Church of England, Church of St. Lawrence, Sydney, and this is where George Henry was christened. Jane died Sydney 1861 daughter of John/Catherine Crawford.
- George Henry and Mary Amelia (Forbes) Scurr had William Crawford Scurr in 1876, Walter.E.Scurr.1877, Violet Minnie 1881 at Newtown.
- Mary Amelia (Forbes) Scurr died 1936 Newtown daughter of Peter.William.D. and Amelia, and if it is her, their surname would have been Forbes.
- Now for the “Glover” connection, an Estere.V.Glover married a George.J.E.Toohy at Rockdale 1934
- A Robert Raymond Glover married Mavis Edna Turner at Kogarah 1942.
- An Augustus Crawford Scurr married Ada Barter at St. Peters.

These are all names in the album (i.e. Scurr, Forbes, Westhoff) but there is no mention of Glover against any photos, only on the flyleaf but the latter names are of all local well known people (i.e. Barter, Turner, Toohey.)

We hope that upon reading these names you may be able to supply us with further information on the above mentioned people and the rightful owner of the album may be found.

Contact: Mrs. Gloria Henke (02) 9587 8307

Francis and Isabella Dickin

Francis Dickin, owner and proprietor of F. Dickin and Sons, resided at 24 Lydham Avenue, several doors down from Lydham Hall. Several items belonging to Francis and his family are at the hall. This article attempts to provide some background knowledge of Francis and his family.

The Dickins' in England...

Francis was born on August 5th 1849 in London. Francis was the son of a cabinetmaker; William Dickin (spelt Dicken in William's indentures). William is the first cabinetmaker in the family that I am aware of. His indentures are still in the family and are dated to the 18th Oct 1823. So the Dickin family's connections with the trade certainly date back!

William's wife died whilst Francis was still an infant. William remarried, and his second wife was known as mother to Francis who always spoke of her with affection. There were other children, and Francis had a nephew or nephews living in Adelaide. One of them, John, visited him at Katoomba in the early twenties. Their son, born after their visit was named "Bexley", which was the name of the Dickin residence at Katoomba.

Isabella Evans was born on December 18th 1848 in Birmingham. Isabella was the daughter of George Evans. Her mother's maiden name was Sophia Standley. George was a Silversmith, and I understand eloped with his employer's daughter, who became Isabella's mother.

Isabella and Francis were married at the Church of St. James the Great, Bethnal Green, London on February 1st 1869. The couple apparently lived in London for a time after their marriage, the birth certificate of their first child, Francis William George, born on the 15th November 1869 showing his parents' address as 16 Blackstone Road. The certificate was issued from St. James, Bethnal Green

The family later moved to Birmingham. Lily's birth certificate (1873) shows the family's address as 23 Hawkes St. Aston (Birmingham). The birth was registered in the district of Deritend, County of Warwick. The address on the acknowledgement form from the NSW Government Agency in answer to their application to emigrate is shown as 95 Larches Street Sparkbrook. The address on Isabella May's death certificate is shown as 95 Larches street Aston. The certificate is dated February 1884. Aston and Sparkbrook are apparently the same place. Of some interest may be this inscription on the back of a birthday bookmark. (No date)

*" Long be the time, far off the day,
Ere you will age or sicken,
Oh long may larches Street rejoice,
In Isabella Dickin. "*

Francis' Employment...

I am unaware of who Francis completed his apprenticeship as a cabinetmaker with however during the 1860s it finished and Francis made the toolbox which is at Lydham Hall. Francis first worked for several large firms before going into business and even exhibited at the 1878 Paris Exhibition. That Francis had ventured into business on his own account is indicated by the following business card.



On the back of the card has been noted "Mr. Jones, Shop Fitter, George Street, and Enterprise Saw Mills, Pyrmont." These were obviously tentative employment prospects, and as Francis was actually employed by David Jones (the David Jones) of George Street, Sydney, first as a cabinet maker, then as foreman and supervisor of the their Cabinet manufactory, it seems that the fame of this firm was known in the old country.

I have been told that Francis had wanted to emigrate to either Australia or New Zealand for some years, but Isabella would not leave England while her mother, Sophia, was still alive. Armed with a blunderbuss to fight off the natives and including a comprehensive encyclopaedia set to educate the children should the local schools be too primitive, the family left Plymouth as emigrants on the S.S. TEXAN, 2135 tons, on Monday the 6th April 1884. The master was Captain R. Morgan, the Surgeon a Dr R. D. McMaster, and the Matron a Mrs Stevens. The voyage took six weeks and five days, the arrival date in Sydney being 23rd May 1884. Francis' drive to emigrate must have been immense! His favourite daughter Isabella had died at 2 years old only months before in February 1884 and his wife must have been highly pregnant during the preparations as she gave birth to a stillborn girl on the first day of the voyage.

On embarking for Australia, the family spent their last night in England at the home of a Mr Thomas Herbert. Their first Australian born child was named after him.

In Sydney...

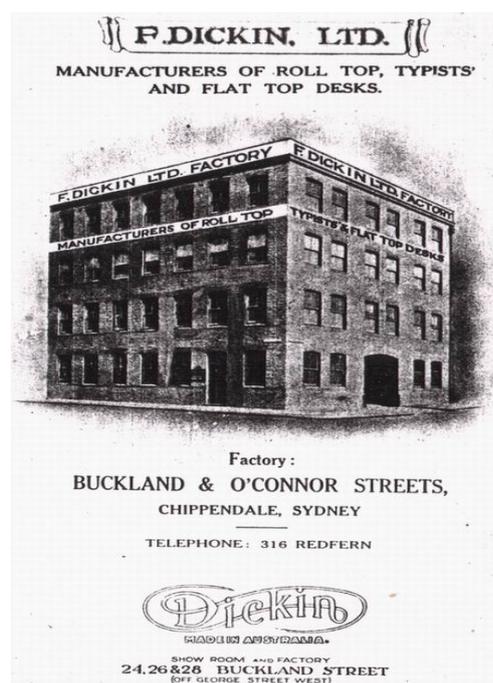
Francis must have been a strong teetotaler as within days of arrival to Sydney Francis joined a Temperance Union. On arrival in Sydney the family settled in rented premises at McDonald Town, now Erskineville. Lily went to school there. They lived in Burren Street, and whilst there Francis started to prefabricate a cottage which was eventually erected in Vivian Street, West Kogarah, now Bexley. The house was named "Galathea" after a British butterfly. (Francis was an amateur lepidopterist, at least in England. Photography seemed to be his hobby in Australia from what I have heard and observed.) The house is still standing in Vivian Street, though for many years the original weatherboards have been covered with fibro cement sheeting. Francis bought the Vivian Street property on the day that the railway was opened to Hurstville.

He later invested in land at Katoomba, and built a holiday home on one of the blocks. A permanent home was later built on the same property in Station Street, and Isabella, Francis and Lily left their Vivian Street home to take up residence there. Francis also was a business associate of EWR McMillan who subdivided the Scarborough Park estate at Sans Souci, where his name is commemorated in Dickin Avenue.

Within a few years of the family's arrival in Sydney 1890, Francis set up as a Cabinetmaker on his own account. His first business address was in a lane off the eastern side of Pitt Street, between Liverpool and Goulbourn Streets. He later moved to Kent Street where he employed other cabinetmakers. His sons, with the exception of Frank (the eldest), George and Tom seemed to have worked there with him.

He later rented a factory in Chippendale, which belonged to the proprietor of a confectionary firm, Enever and Appleton? (Mr Enever I think). Although Francis wanted to purchase this property, the asking price was evidently too high and the deal was never completed.

Francis as an expert craftsman concentrated on building custom furniture and fitments and examples of his efforts are still around in many churches. One that I know of is a pulpit in the Roman Catholic Cathedral in Lismore. His firm also completed the joinery in the original Marble Bar in Adams Hotel. He refused to participate in the extensions to the bar some years later as it would have involved his men working on the Sabbath. Although originally an Anglican, he joined the Congregational Church in Rockdale as a foundation member. He was actively engaged in the Congregational Church for the remainder of his life. It is perhaps worthy of note that Lily Dickin was the Rockdale Church's last surviving foundation



member. She died in November 1959. The pulpit and communion furniture were made at the Dickin Factory.

So the second generation grew older and assumed responsibility. A block of land was purchased in Lord's Road, Leichhardt and a substantial factory was erected on it. The business became a limited company with the sons who were working in the business becoming shareholders. Francis was the governing director with Albert general manager and Fred managing the factory. Ted worked as a cabinetmaker and William (Bill) a polisher.

With the advent of the new arrangement in control of the factory, the format changed to one of quantity and concentrated on the manufacture of office furniture. Roll-top, flat-top and typist desks of various sizes and types were made to satisfy the needs of a city's offices and also sent further a field with a Dickin Roll-top being recently located at Tamworth after serving time at a stock and station agents' office. Ice chests also featured occasionally.

With the invention of the gramophone, various types from table models to elaborate floor models were made. Radio and combination radio/gramophone cabinet replaced the gramophone and these continued until the factory transferred to war production.

Many and varied were the various items but probably the most notable was the rear spar of the wing of the Mosquito Aeroplane, an all-wood general purpose aircraft that developed a substantial reputation.

Isabella evidently suffered from a long illness. In 1918 Isabella died at their Katoomba house. In 1924 Francis and Lily visited England, and whilst there made contact with several member of the Dickin family. On their return to Sydney, father and daughter moved back to Bexley, this time to 24 Lydham Avenue. This was to be their last home. Francis died in 1924 and Lily in 1959. Isabella, Francis and Lily share a common grave in the independent section of Rookwood Cemetery.



Francis and Isabella Dickin (1912)



Dickin Home "Galathea" (1886-7)

Source: Article written and Photographs supplied by Mr. Michael Simpson of Armidale, the Great – great - grandson of Francis & Isabella Dickin.

Note: Items displayed at Lydham Hall that were donated by the Dickin' Family:

A Sheraton style Parlour Suite, Cane Rocking Chair, Bedside Water Jug and Glass and Toolbox that was made by Francis Dickin and mentioned in the above article.

INTERESTING READING

I have no idea if the following is fact or fiction. No matter what it is - it's very interesting and it's something fun to read.

- In George Washington's days, there were no cameras. One's image was either sculpted or painted. Some paintings of George Washington showed him standing behind a desk with one arm behind his back while others showed both legs and both arms. Prices charged by painters were not based on how many people were to be painted, but by how many limbs were to be painted. Arms and legs are "limbs" therefore painting them would cost the buyer more. Hence the expression "Okay, but it'll cost you an arm and a leg."
- As incredible as it sounds, men and women took baths only twice a year! (May & October) Women always kept their hair covered while men shaved their heads (because of lice and bugs) and wore wigs. Wealthy men could afford good wigs. The wigs couldn't be washed so to clean them, they could carve out a loaf of bread, put the wig in the shell and bake it for 30 minutes. The heat would make the wig big and fluffy, hence the term "big wig." Today we often use the term "here comes the Big Wig" because someone appears to be or is powerful and wealthy.
- In the late 1700's many houses consisted of a large room with only one chair. Commonly, a long wide board was folded down from the wall and used for dining. The "head of the household" always sat in the chair while everyone else ate sitting on the floor. Once in a while an invited guest would be offered to sit in this chair during a meal whom was almost always a man. To sit-in the chair meant you were important and in charge. Sitting in the chair, one was called the "chair man." Today in business we use the expression/title "Chairman."
- Needless to say, personal hygiene left much room for improvement. As a result, many women and men had developed acne scars by adulthood. The women would spread bee's wax over their facial skin to smooth out their complexions. When they were speaking to each other, if a woman began to stare at another woman's face she was told "mind your own bee's wax." Should the woman smile, the wax would crack, hence the term "crack a smile." Also, when they sat too close to the fire, the wax would melt and therefore the expression "losing face."
- Ladies wore corsets which would lace up in the front. A tightly tied lace was worn by a proper and dignified lady as in "straight laced".
- Common entertainment included playing cards. However, there was a tax levied when purchasing playing cards but only applicable to the "ace of spades." To avoid paying the tax, people would purchase 51 cards instead. Yet, since most games require 52 cards, these people were thought to be stupid or dumb because they weren't "playing with a full deck."
- Early politicians required feedback from the public to determine what was considered important to the people. Since there were no telephones, TV's or radios, the politicians sent their assistants to local taverns, pubs and bars who were told to "go sip some ale" and listen to people's conversations and political concerns. Many assistants were dispatched at different times. "You go sip here" and "You go sip there." The two words "go sip" were eventually combined when referring to the local opinion and thus, we have the term "gossip."
- At local taverns, pubs and bars, people drank from pint and quart sized containers. A barmaid's job was to keep an eye on the customers and keep the drinks coming. She had to pay close attention and remember who was drinking in "pints" and who was drinking in "quarts." Hence the term "minding your P's and Q's."

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING June 30th, 2003

INCOME

EXPENDITURE

<i>Membership subs.</i>	319.00	<i>Bulk Postage</i>	289.34
<i>Total Donations</i>	196.35	<i>St. George Transport</i>	384.78
<i>Sale of Books</i>	321.95	<i>RAHS Conference</i>	99.00
<i>Bus Tours</i>	380.00	<i>RAHS Accommodation</i>	114.00
<i>Raffles</i>	104.30	<i>Fairfax Printers Tour</i>	84.70
		<i>Arncliffe Walk Exp.</i>	78.45
	1,321.60	<i>RAHS Subscription</i>	83.00
<i>less Driver's expenses</i>	40.00	<i>RAHS Public Liability</i>	630.30
		<i>Bexley Stall Hire</i>	20.00
	1,281.60	<i>Expenses for gifts, etc.</i>	90.75
			1874.32
<i>Interest</i>	2.40	<i>Less unrepresented cheques</i>	
<i>Balance in Bank (30/6/2002)</i>	1,076.85	000112	78.45
		000114	2.40
		000115	630.30
			711.15
		<i>Balance in Bank</i>	1,197.68
Total	\$ 2,360.85	Total	\$ 2,360.85

I have examined the books presented by Mrs. Lenane, Treasurer and found correct

L. Thompson. 28/7/03

Dear Members

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for the various donations to our Society.

Dora Lenane
Treasurer