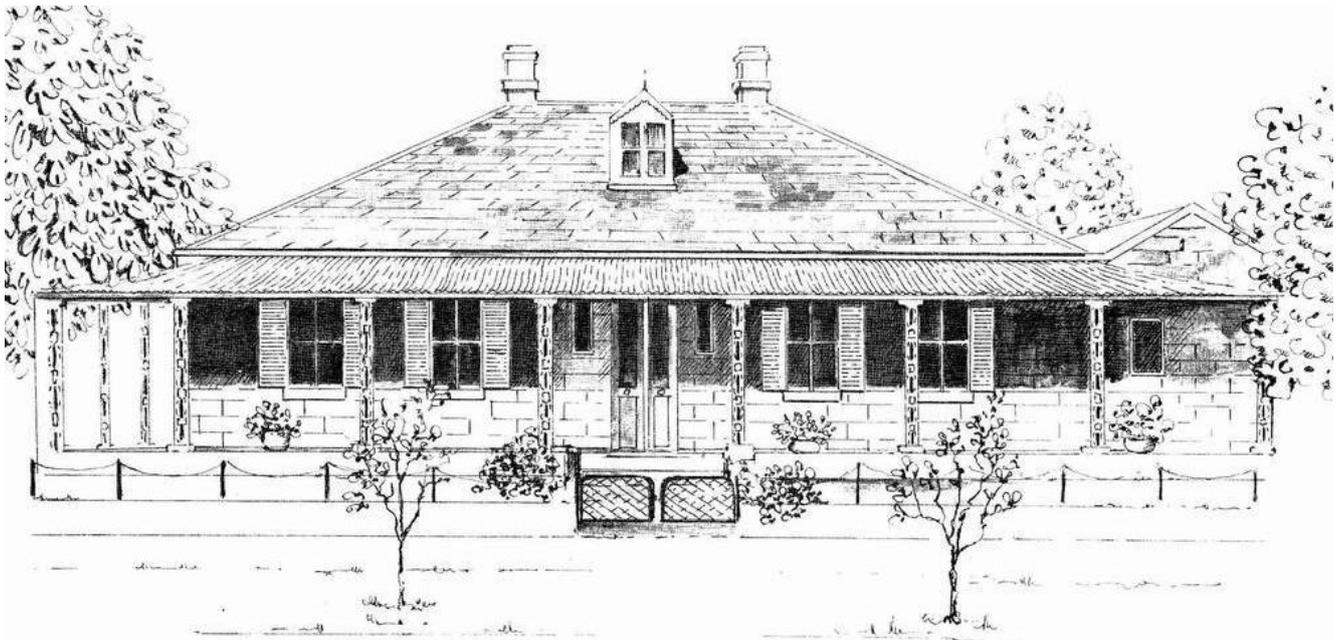


# *St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin*

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

*JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2004 EDITION*



*33rd Anniversary of Lydham  
Halls Opening to the Public*



# LYDHAM HALL

## Some Points of Interest

### 1. THE SITE.

Originally known as "Lydham", then "Lydham Hill" and later "Lydham Hall", the house stands on part of the original Bexley Land Grant of 1, 300 acres made to James Chandler in 1822 by Governor Brisbane.

It was subdivided in 1850 and 67 acres were bought by wealthy master butcher, Joseph Davis.

### 2. THE HOUSE.

Erected in 1855 on the highest point of land between the Cook's and George's River, the house was built by stonemason, James Benson, from stone quarried near the corner of Villiers and Arlington Streets.

The design is a particularly good example of the transition from the simplicity of the Georgian Colonial style of architecture to the more ornate pattern of the Mid-Victorian era.

Basically, the building consists of four large rooms - each 14 ft. by 20 ft. with a 10 ft. wide centrally placed hall. A narrow staircase at the southern side of the hall reaches two upper rooms each 18'6" square and lit by near dormer windows.

Full length French windows face north, east and south to take advantage of the cool sea breezes whilst those facing west are conventionally smaller to keep the hot westerlies at bay.

Originally a 9 ft. wide verandah extended around all four sides of the house and its iron roof is unsupported except for bearers in each corner and open work cast iron columns at 10 feet intervals.

The red and stone colour scheme is original.

The hip roof of the house is covered with blue slates and there are a series of small decorated brackets beneath the somewhat narrow eaves.

The two wide chimneys are of unusual design and each has a drip skirt placed above the flashing.

The kitchen, stables and servants' quarters were originally detached and stood at the south-east corner of the building. The kitchen was demolished and attached to the main building for convenience in 1919, the remainder of the outbuildings being demolished in 1958 when the last of the land was subdivided.

All the interior woodwork is of cedar which was hand polished. The floors are New Zealand Kauri pine and the fireplaces - two black and two pink are of Italian Carrara marble. The battered lath and plaster ceilings are original and are bordered by a handsome plaster filigree cornice.

A circular drive from Forest Road gave access to the rear of the present house and the outbuildings.

### 3. THE DAVIS FAMILY.

Joseph Davis was born in Brede, a village near Winchelsea in the County of Sussex in 1827.

He migrated to Australia some time before 1850, married a local girl, Ellen Turner, and set up in business in King Street, Newtown - then a fashionable suburb, first as a publican and then as a butcher.

The business flourished and soon Davis was buying, fattening and slaughtering his own stock.

This led him to purchase the property at Bexley where he rested and fattened his cattle before slaughtering them at the site of the old Earl Park Sports Ground at Arncliffe.

There were four sons and three daughters of the marriage Austin, Joseph Jnr., Herbert and Frederick, Jan Ann, Charlotte and Amy. Frederick was a cripple and died at the age of 15. He was buried in the graveyard of St. George's Church of England at Hurstville.

Davis himself also became crippled in later life when he slipped on the carcass of a newly killed steer whose horns penetrated his side. Thereafter he always dragged his right foot and was forced to travel about in a reclining position in a specially converted Victoria.

Davis, by nature, was a self-effacing man, quietly spoken, of retiring disposition and devoted to his family. In his last years he became deeply religious and was a generous benefactor to both St. George's Church at Hurstville and Christ Church at Bexley.

He lent his support to the incorporation of the district into the Municipality of West Botany in 1871 and to the erection of Bexley School in 1887.

He was also a renowned judge of beef.

Mrs. Davis was the business brains of the family and continued the butchering business in partnership with her son, Joseph Jnr. after her husband's death in 1889.

When the Illawarra Railway Line was opened in October 1884, Davis subdivided all but 18 acres of his holding naming the streets on the Estate after his sons, Frederick, Herbert and his eldest grandson Clarence (Dransfield).

Davis made several trips to England seeking relief from his paralysis but (led on January 25th, 1889, in his 63rd year. He was buried with his son Frederick in the family vault at St. George's.

In August 1889, a second subdivision took place and Stanley (grandson), Oswell (grandson) and Joseph (son) Streets appeared. Joseph Street has since been renamed Lydham Avenue and Stanley Street, Tyrrell Street.

Early the next year, Mrs. Davis sold "Lydham Hill" and returned to Newtown and later to Waverley where she died in 1906.

It is interesting to note that Davis's daughter Charlotte married the wealthy and eccentric francophile, George Brock, who built his chateau at Mona Vale.

When the Davis family first occupied "Lydham" a special piece of music, the "Lidham Hill Mazurka" was specially composed for the housewarming. A copy of this music is still kept at the house.

#### **4. SUBSEQUENT OWNERS.**

"Lydham Hill" was purchased in May 1890 by Frederick Gibbins of "Dappeto", Wollongong Road, Arncliffe - now the Salvation Army Aged Persons' complex - and from that date until 1907 was tenanted by a succession of well-to-do tenants - the most prominent being H. E. Hogan, Manager of the Australian Gas Light Company (1903 - 1906).

On New Year's Day 1907 David George Stead, a widower with a small daughter, married Gibbins' daughter, Ada. They lived in Lydham Hill until Gibbins' death in 1917. It was during their tenancy that the name was changed from "Lydham Hill" to "Lydham Hall."

David Stead's small daughter, Christina, became world famous as the authoress, Christina Stead and is still living in America.

David Stead, himself, was a man of considerable note. A world renowned naturalist, he was for many years President of the Wild Life Preservation Society of N.S.W. ; Superintendent of Fisheries for the N.S.W. Government; General Manager of the State Trawling Industry and Director of the Australian Whaling Company. He was a world authority on Fisheries, Marine Biology and Oceanography; a member of many learned scientific societies and a prolific author and contributor of scientific material.

When Frederick Gibbins died in 1917 both "Dappeto" and "Lydham Hall" were sold - "Dappeto" being bought by the Salvation Army and "Lydham Hall" by Alfred Oliver.

In 1934 the property passed to Alfred Oliver's son, William, and daughter Ann (Mrs. Emanuel).

They, in turn, subdivided the remainder of the estate and sold the house to Mr. and Mrs. G. Long in 1958.

The property was bought by Rockdale Council in October, 1970, on condition that it be preserved whilst ever it is physically possible to do so.

## 5. THE FURNITURE.

Most of the furniture is on loan from the National Trust and was part of the Estate of the late Miss Mabel Holbeach of Arncliffe.

Miss Holbeach was housekeeper to the Richardson family who were direct descendants of Rebecca (Granny) Oakes - the first white child born in Australia of free parents.

The Richardsons were originally tenants of "Tempe House" built by A.B. Sparke in 1828.

When it was sold to the Catholic Church in 1883 they built "Wickham" a fine two-storied residence at the junction of Princes Highway and Forest Road. The eldest son was still in residence when the property was compulsorily acquired and demolished by the Housing Commission in the 1950's.

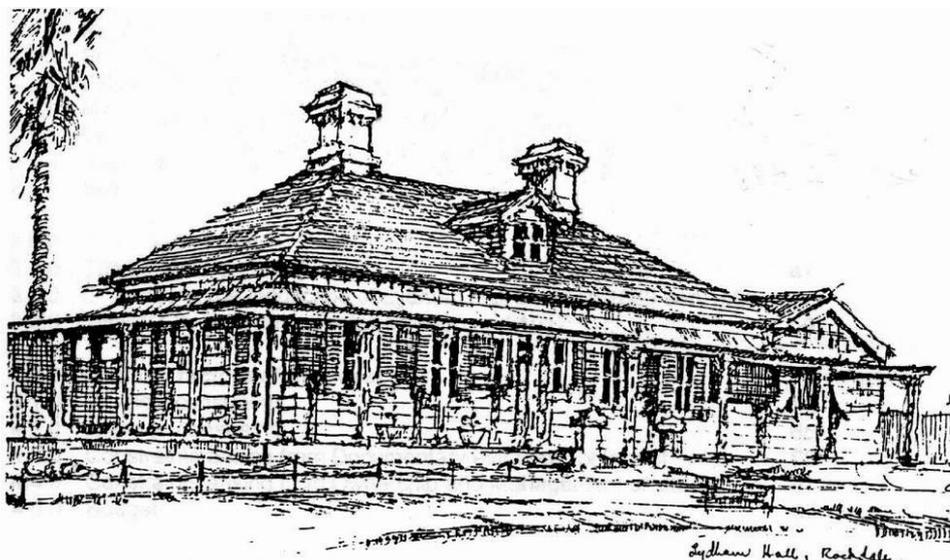
Some of the pieces of furniture now at "Lydham Hall" are believed to have been with the Richardson's when they lived at "Tempe House", namely the Victorian mahogany serpentine-fronted double-ended drawing room settee; the cedar break-front double-pedestal sideboard; and the two mahogany tub-shaped-back dining chairs in the drawing room, together with the mahogany half-tester bed, the dressing table, the settee, and the fine cedar wardrobe in the bedroom, all of which date from the 1860's.

Other valuable pieces include the early Victorian mahogany shaving-stand, the walnut double-flap afternoon-tea table, and the Burnt-walnut toilet mirror placed on the chest of drawers. The furniture is exceptionally well preserved and even the late Edwardian pieces are of interest. The St. George Historical Society acknowledges the wonderful assistance of Mrs. Hawkins of Forest Road, Bexley, a niece of Miss Holbeach, through whose gracious kindness and good offices this furniture, together with some lovely pieces of china-ware, have been made available for display purposes.

Acknowledgment must also be made to the members of the St. George Historical Society who have either loaned or donated to the Museum a fine range of glassware, silverware, chinaware and decorative ornaments, etc. all of which are of great interest and relate to the early days of the St. George area in particular.

**Source:** *Copied from previous description of "Lydham Hall" – Author Unknown*

Lydham Hall is the only Historic Home open to the public in the Rockdale City Municipality



## **St. George Historical Society Inc. & Lydham Hall Book Sales at “Village Fairs”**

I thought it might be an idea to re-cap the benefit we have reaped from taking part in the St. George area “Village Fairs” or as they are sometimes called “Village Markets” and may I also take this opportunity of wishing Members and their families a very happy New Year.

Most Members probably know that we try to take an active part in as many of these Fairs as we can as it not only makes our presence known in the St. George area (and hopefully gain new members) but also enables us to sell the booklets and books held by the above about the local area. Early Members of the St. George Historical Society Inc. researched and published the ten (10) booklets No’s. 1 to 10 inclusive and we do try and keep a ready supply of these available. Lydham Hall also has a number of publications that have been published on the local and surrounding area and books relating to Christina Stead whose formative years were spent at Lydham Hall and we have had these for sale since April 1997. When news of an impending Fair/Market reaches us we try and participate and are always grateful for the assistance given by our Members in manning these Stalls on the day and particularly to those who have picked up from, and returned to, Lydham Hall a table or tables to be used on the day along with the boxes of books. These Stalls over the last few years have been organized by Mr. and Mrs. Heinz and Gloria Henke, their son Richard and myself with assistance from other Members. At times this assistance has been difficult to find, sometimes because we haven’t heard of the Fair/Market being on until a date fairly close to it happening and thus many have already made other plans for the day.

However there are now not so many of these community “fun days” taking place due to the increased Insurance costs but some do still happen and when news reaches you that we are going to participate in same it would be appreciated if you would contact any of the Committee Members to pass on the word that you could help out for an hour or two to give the ones who are manning the St. George Historical Society Inc./Lydham Hall stall a relief. Some of the past avenues we have participated in have been Arncliffe Village Fair (2), Bexley Village Fair (3), Opening of Wollli Creek Station, Local Government Week (at Rockdale City Council Admin. Bldg.), Volunteers Day at Bexley School of Arts, Kingsgrove Uniting Church (2), Opening of M5 Tunnel, Christina Stead Day held each July at Lydham Hall, Heritage Week each year and of course at the Royal Australian Historical Society’s Annual Conference. Our books are also sold at Lydham Hall on the normal days of opening though these sales are not large.

To just show the amount of Sales that have been made at the dates below and the difference when the Stalls were participated in from February, 2000 I list the following figures — these figures also include books sold by physically taking them to schools in the St. George and Sutherland area in 1997/98 (i.e. Sutherland, Sutherland North, Bangor, Menai, Inaburra, Lucas Hts., Tharawal, Penshurst Girls, Kogarah High School, Oyster Bay, Como, Como West, Blakehurst, Canton, Bexley, Hurstville, Jannali, Jannali East, Jannali High, Bexley and Arncliffe.

	St. George Books	Lydham Hall Books
July. 1994 to June 1995	\$ 219.00	-
July. 1995 to June 1996	\$ 193.00	-
July. 1996 to June 1997	\$ 242.70	\$ 839.59
July. 1997 to June 1998	\$ 126.50	\$ 909.65
July. 1998 to June 1999	\$ 52.50	\$ 317.75
July. 1999 to June 2000	\$ 40.00	\$ 281.90
July. 2000 to June 2001	\$ 11.00	\$ 347.70
July. 2001 to June 2002	\$ 332.50	\$ 1141.10
July. 2002 to Dec. 2003 (6 months only)	\$ 161.10	\$ 1051.75

So you can see the benefit to the Society and Lydham Hall by participating in these Fairs where sometimes the cost is nil or up to \$40 for the day, so here’s hoping for more Community Village Fairs in the coming year and word of your ability to help out on same. Also if you find your local school or any school not listed above is interested in having a look at our joint collection of books for sale please let me know.

Bettye Ross - Vice President & Treasurer Lydham Hall Committee.

## Some “First’s” In The Colony, Of Australian History

### January:

- 1 a) Commonwealth of Australia proclaimed in the Centennial Park by *Viscount Hampden*, 1901.
- b) First issue of the Rev. J.D. Lang’s paper *The Colonist*, 1835.
- c) First issue of Henry Parkes’ paper, *The Empire*, 1851.
- d) The name Tasmania officially adopted in lieu of Van Diemen’s Land, 1856.
- 3 Lieut. -Colonel Johnston died at Annandale, 1823.
- 4 a) Birth of John Blaxiand, Kent, England 1760.
- b) Dampier sighted New Holland near C. Borda on North West Coast, 1688.
- 5 William de Vlamingh landed on Western Australian Coast near Swan River, 1696.
- 6 Sir John Franklin became Governor Van Diemen’s Land, 1837.
- 7 Death of Sir Edmund Barton, first Prime Minister of Australia, 1920.
- 8 Circumnavigation of Van Diemen’s Land completed by Bass and Flinders, 1799.
- 9 First child born on Norfolk Island & named Norfolk 1789
- 10 Last Convicts arrived in Western Australia, 1868.
- 12 a) Tin discovered at Tenterfield, 1872.
- b) First case of Bubonic plague in Australia — discovered in Adelaide, 1900.
- c) A.C. Gregory left Sydney in search of Leichhardt, 1858.
- 13 Baudin anchored at D’Entrecsteaux Channel, Van Diemen’s Land, 1802.
- 15 Sailors’ Home in Sydney opened, 1865.
- 16 First Free Settlers arrived in Australia (by Bellona), 1793.
- 18 Governor Philip first entered Botany Bay, 1788.
- 21 a) Public Funeral of Burke and Wills, 1863.
- b) Road over the Blue Mountains completed by Lieut. William Cox, 1815, (101 miles, 28 men, 6 months).
- 24 La Perouse appeared off Botany Bay, 1788.
- 25 Trial of John Macarthur on Bligh’s instruction, 1808.
- 30 Birth of Lachian Macquarie, 1761 (Governor of New South Wales 1810-1821).

### February:

- 1 Philip Gidley King appointed Superintendent and Commandant of Norfolk Island, 1788.
- 2 Captain Charles Sturt discovered the Darling River, 1829.
- 5 George Bass left Sydney, and was not heard of again.
- 10 St.James Church consecrated by Rev S. Marsden 1824
- 11 Discovery of payable gold at junction of Summerhill Creek & Lewes Ponds by E. Hargraves & Lister, 1851
- 14 Murder of Captain Cook at Karakakoa Bay, Hawaii, 1779
- 17 Death of Pere Receveur of La Perouse’s Party at Botany Bay, 1788.
- 22 First land grant in Australia (issued to James Ruse) 1791.
- 28 The first execution in New South Wales, 1788.

**Source:** *Extracted from Calendar of Events in Australian History - KR. Cramp, 1933*

# I Do Not Choose To Be Common

*It is my right to be uncommon – if I can.*

*I seek opportunity – not security.*

*I want to take the calculated risk;  
to dream and to build, to fail and succeed.*

*I refuse to barter incentive for a dole.*

*I prefer the challenge of life to the guaranteed existence;  
the thrill of fulfillment to the stale calm of utopia.*

*I will not tread freedom for beneficence  
nor my dignity for a handout.*

*I will never cower before any master  
nor bend to any threat.*

*It is my heritage to stand erect, proud and unafraid;  
to think and act for myself, enjoy the benefit  
of my creations and to face the world  
boldly and say, this I have done.*

*All this is what it means to an Australian.*

My Creed by Dean Alfange