

# *St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin*

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

*SEPTEMBER – OCTOBER 2004 EDITION*



*Our recently enlarged factory.*

**RICKETTS & THORP**

**Princes Highway, Rockdale**

'PHONE: LX 1241

***1912 - 1977***

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***Meetings are held 2:00 PM the third Saturday 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**

### **Oct 29<sup>th</sup> Kingsgrove 2004 Art Show**

On 29<sup>th</sup>, 30<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> October the 11<sup>th</sup> Art and Craft Show will be held at Kingsgrove Uniting Church. Moreton Avenue, Kingsgrove.

At this event the St. George Historical Society will be present with a table to sell our books.

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### **SOMETHING SPECIAL**

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At our recent St. George Historical Society meetings we have had the pleasure of seeing Mrs. Jean Preddey, a Foundation Member of the St. George Historical Society. It was good to see her there and hope to see more people attending the meetings, since the change of times has taken place.

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### **KINGSGROVE --- THE FIRST 200 YEARS      New book release**

The Book is available at Lydham Hall and Society meetings for \$ 20.00. If you wish to receive a copy by post send \$ 27.00 to cover packing and postage with your name and address to Mr. Brian. Madden, 19 Marcella St., Kingsgrove 2208 ... (Phone 9718 4538)

## “ONLY THE BEST – SECOND BEST NOT BEING GOOD ENOUGH”

*Ricketts & Thorp Pty Ltd (R&T) – 1912-1977*

Furniture Manufacturer, Cnr Hattersley St & Princes Highway, Rockdale, NSW,  
Originally recorded at Kimpton Street, Rockdale, 1913

### THE BEGINNINGS

In 1911, Gilbert S. Ricketts arrived from England with 10/- in his pocket. He came from a family of 10 from Yeovil, Somerset, England. His father owned a glove factory. Aged 27, Gilbert went to work at Beard Watson & Co (Established in 1889 by Enoch Beard and James Henry Watson as a carpet warehouse and later, in 1900, became a cabinetmaking manufacturer at 27 Moorgate Street, Sydney). The foreman at Beard Watsons, George Thorp, was sympathetic to English migrants and offered Gilbert lodgings. Gilbert became friends with George's son Fred, who also worked at Beard Watson. Gilbert soon realised the opportunities available in the cabinetmaking business and set himself up in 1912 in a shed at the back of the Thorp home in Herbert Street, Rockdale, Fred Thorp joined him six months later..

Orders began to trickle in but the work of these two men was its own recommendation and additional space and labour had to be engaged to meet increasing business. A small factory was built at Kimpton Street, Rockdale, near Banksia Railway Station. One of the first things the young partners made was a hand-cart for delivering their furniture orders. However, this soon gave way to a horse and cart driven by Gilberts father-in-law, Mr R Gillard, who at that time had a dairy in Rockdale. The business soon expanded and eventually took up the whole block bordered by the railway line, Princes Highway, Kimpton Street and Rockdale Street. This extensive area included workshops, storage sheds and timber yards. In the early 30's extensions were carried out to add 6,000 square feet of space, the late 1940's saw the addition of a 2nd floor to part of the factory, adding a polishing shop and electric goods lift.

By the 1950's the business included timber drying racks, timber and plywood store in Rockdale Street and timber racks and upholstery shop in Kimpton Street. Large stacks of Australian cedar, Queensland maple, Queensland walnut, silky oak, Tasmanian blackwood and imported English and Japanese oak, mahogany, beech and European walnut, etc. were air dried for several years before being kiln dried in a factory built kiln.

The Kimpton Street (later Hattersley Street) entrances to the offices, factory and showroom with 2 loading docks filled the busy little street with trucks and parked cars. The 2nd floor addition housed the main polishing shop with spray booths, drying oven, fuming cupboards for finishing the main domestic range and a number of production items. The basement or ground floor had the veneer preparation room with extensive veneer storage (out of the sunlight), of exquisite Australian and imported veneers such as Italian walnut, sycamore, English birch, Butt maple, English oak, etc. This floor also contained a machine shop, small cabinet shop, veneer guillotines, jointing, taping machines and vacuum tables used in producing shaped plywood components, showroom, small specialist polishing shop and fitting-up and despatch.

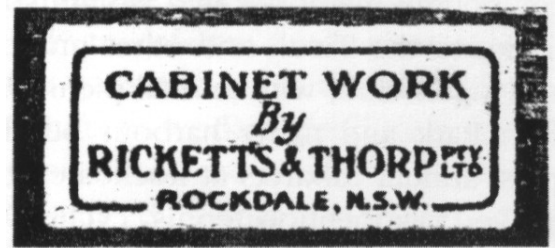
The main floor housed:

- The main furniture cabinet shop with up to 30 cabinetmakers and a production assembly shop with many mechanical cramping aids and about 60 cabinetmakers.
- Chairmaking section with hundreds of chair patterns and templates hanging from the ceiling.
- Veneer pressing room with multi-daylight presses and radio frequency transmitter and associated presses.
- Woodmachining section with detail saws, spindle moulders, sanding machines, multiple boring machines and dovetailers, etc.

- Timber preparation area receiving rough cut timber from the store and machining to cutting list sizes.
- Main office and drawing office producing presentation drawings, factory drawings and cutting lists for all orders placed in the factory.

### **FURNITURE LABELS AND STAMPS**

A Ricketts & Thorp piece of furniture can be identified by a metal label "Manufactured by Ricketts & Thorp" or the following paper label "Cabinetwork by Ricketts and thorp Pty Ltd, Rockdale, NSW"



Metal stamps were used to indent three numbers on furniture the factory registration number (Regd. No 440), a four digit job number (jobs were numbered 1000-9999) and a cabinetmakers number (tradesmen were allowed to stamp their number on the piece of furniture)

In 1936 about 300 employees worked in the factory, 1950's about 180 employees to approximately 80 in 1977. Ricketts & Thorp had some unique machinery that was rare in furniture factories around Sydney, some was imported from England and Germany, some were purpose built.

#### ***Surfacing Machine:***

A large rotating jointer blade set in a metal bench where the timber is fed across without excess pressure to plane/face of the board straight and true.

#### ***Cabriole leg shaping machine:***

Producing cabriole legs from a cast iron original. The timber is held between 2 centres and a metal follower travelling horizontally to copy the shape and cut the timber to shape with a revolving cone cutter.

Other machines were: Specially built sanding machines for chairwork; early designed speed sander; radio frequency gluing transmitter and gluing presses; and automatic spindle moulders.

Gilbert Ricketts died in 1952. Gilbert had 1 daughter, Mary and 5 sons, Stan, Lawrence, John and his sons Frank, who was working in the office, and Brian, who had joined the company as an apprentice at 17. Brian and Frank took over their father's interest. Frank, after retiring from the Army, became Company Secretary and Brian, who had joined the Air Force and on his return worked in the drawing office, later became Factory Manager. Frank and Brian were with the company at its closing in 1977.

Fred Thorp had 2 daughters, Barbara and Yvonne. They were both Directors of the company, and her husband, Ross Cox, worked as a salesman with the firm for a few years. Fred passed away on 14th August 1968.

Fred Thorp's brother, Jack, had an automatic wood turning business a little further up Princes Highway in Banksia and was a regular visitor to Ricketts & Thorp. Jack engineered many ingenious wood turning lathes and finishing machines, turning out thousands of knobs, handles, balls and light fittings etc, in fact anything that is round and made out of timber. J.E. Thorp Woodturning made stamped wooden lottery balls to exact specifications for many years. The factory closed in the late 1980's.

Freds 2 other brothers George and Frank were partners in Peddle Thorp and Walker Architects in Sydney, his other brother Arthur worked for The Pick Me Up Company.

### **TRAINING OF TOP CLASS TRADESPERSONS – THE "OLD FIRM"**

Ricketts & Thorp had always been proud of the high standards of its employees and the apprentices it trained, and of the relations which have existed between management and staff. Along

with Beard Watsons, Ricketts & Thorp was considered the ultimate place to be trained. Without the skill and dedication of these men and women, the firm's success would not have been possible.

Ex-employees are to be found in successful, diverse occupations in many parts of Australia, some in management positions; others in their own businesses. Some of these include Bowman & Rodgers, Duncan & Whelan, Ron Locke Pty Ltd., Nelson & Johnston, Franklin & Smith and many more.

In its 66 years, hundreds gave 20 years or more faithful service while there were seven employees with 50 years or more service. One employee, on being given his notice said "after 53 years service, a week's notice! If I'd known the job wasn't going to be permanent I wouldn't have started". They were always rewarded with good conditions, generous payment of unused sick pay, a Christmas hamper, and consideration in the pay packet in times of absence due to family illness or bereavement. The Ricketts & Thorp families owned 6 houses in and around Banksia and these were let to employees at generous rent.

It was always popularly accepted that Ricketts & Thorp was a major training ground for furniture tradesmen. To work at the "old firm" also bought memories of a vibrant social life, attending theatre parties to the Tivoli and other musicals, Saturday cricket teams and golf club, with annual picnics and harbour cruises to Neilsen Park and many harbour beaches, Childrens Christmas parties, annual cabarets at Rockdale Town Hall and many employees played competition tennis and cycling and other sports together at weekends.

The lunchtime cricket in Rockdale Street (you were out if the ball landed on Princes Highway or on the timber stacks) were legendary as well as the intense games of cards (500) on a piece of plywood on rubbish tins at lunchtime.

## **THE EMPLOYEES**

The factory at Rockdale provided employment for St George and Sutherland Shire residents and in the 1940's returning service personnel took part in the Government Retraining Scheme. The company was involved in the migrant training program, employing many production employees from Europe, in particular the large Italian and Greek community around Rockdale. Many tradesmen came to the company following the completion of the Snowy River Scheme.

With their commitment to training R & T would always take their full quota of apprentices, most would stay for several years after completing their time to become valued tradesmen, some becoming specialists in particular techniques and furniture components. A few of these specialties were in extension table construction, Hepplewhite sideboard and chair production, French polishing, lacquer work, solid colour finishing, production machining, belt sanding, veneer matching, veneer laying, shaped component veneering, specialist pattern and jig making, timber preparation, circular saw and spindle operation and many more.

The factory also had a full time machine maintenance engineer, saw and tool sharpener (saw doctor), boiler attendant, cleaners, first aid nurse, delivery persons and yardmen.

The office had a staff of approx. 12 with Accountant, Despatch & Drawing Office staff, estimators and sales staff at the factory and at the showroom at North Sydney.

A lot of work was contracted out with 2 woodturners and 2 carvers producing components, and companies providing metal components for office desks and special custom-built work; lounge chair frames and upholstery sewers.

## **PRODUCTS**

Over the years Ricketts and Thorp became well known for the production of every kind of household, office, church and school furniture. From the 1920s, they kept a full production line keeping up to 50 employees employed and allowing sections of the factory short of work to move tradesmen in and out of the production lines.

The first of these were poultry incubators made for industry under licence to "Buckeye"- an American Company- and "Bluebird" ice chests with fittings imported from the USA until EFCO Manufacturing of Arncliffe started to produce suitable hardware.

In the 1930s, Ricketts & Thorp were a leading supplier of radio cabinets to the manufacturers of radio receiving sets. The development of this section of their business was largely due to what was known as the "The Scullin Tariffs of 1931", which placed a prohibitive duty on the imports of complete radio sets that at that time were entering Australia mostly from America. The effect of these tariffs was the encouragement of a very important secondary industry, which provided work for many Australians.

During the Second World War, its output was devoted almost entirely to defence production, including a major contribution to the construction of the "Mosquito" bomber. The factory had two shifts of workers producing parts for Hawker De Havilland who produced the aircraft at Bankstown and Sale in Victoria.

Ricketts & Thorp, together with many other furniture factories in Sydney, produced spars and three hundred varied parts for aircraft, using laminated timbers and plywood glued together with urea formaldehyde. They were the first to use this synthetic adhesive with various thicknesses of Canadian Spruce and plywoods, and other hard materials such as "diatex" and "dialac" made of highly pressed cloth and resin.

Other defence products were "Owen" gun butts, made out of Queensland maple, jungle knife handles out of jarrah, ammunition boxes, jettison belly tanks for aircraft and trestle tables for the Army.

During the war a threshold (dedman) was placed on furniture costs that made the selling price uneconomical. The only other item produced outside of defence supply was shaped plywood mouldings, usually veneered crossgrain, and sold to Leopold Barnetts for re-sale to the manufacturers of radio cabinets and dining room suites.

The 1950s saw the company producing many types of radiograms/hi-fi cabinets for HMV (His Masters Voice), AWA and Stromberg Carlson. These cabinets were fine pieces of furniture made out of matched veneers of European and American walnut and butt maple with lift-up lids and pull-out record player deck.

Sewing machine cabinets were produced for Bebarfalds Ltd and Pinnocks. The cabinet and table models were made out of Queensland Maple in the Swedish style, with tapered rectangular legs and a lift-up top. The sewing machine hinged down inside and the cabinet models was fitted for fabrics and cottons. Probably the most popular model was the portable with a rounded top of plywood and a solid timber machine base.

When television was introduced in the late 1950s it provided work for 100 employees producing 200-300 cabinets per week from the simple plywood "box" with tapered turned legs with brass ferrules, to pieces of furniture built to take TV receivers, for HMV, Admiral, Stromberg-Carlson and Kriesler.

The workshop was also kept busy with the manufacturer of interior linings for the automobiles made by the Nuffield Company. Dashboards and door linings for Wolsley and Rover shaped and veneered in European walnut.

Showing the versatility of the factory, refrigerated bottle cabinets for hotels around NSW, with metal liners, insulation and heavy duty hardware, were a return to the ice chests produced by the company in the 1920's.

With the saturation of the TV market and suppliers importing their own cabinets in the 1960's, the factory turned to producing school furniture, in particular library, science and laboratory furniture for Government sponsored additions to the State and Private education system.

During the last 15 years of the company, with the growth in office space in the city, approximately 50 desks per week were produced in veneered particle board and solid timber, with laminated plastic tops and metal legs. Queensland black bean and Queensland maple were popular timbers, together with laminated plastic finishes. With so many commercial premises to be furnished, the use of plastic surfacing became particularly popular.

The supply of office desks initiated a lot of extra work for the factory. Desk pedestals were produced in batches of 200 and drawers in batches of 500-600. The tops, desk arrangements, and finishes were manufactured to suit the individual customer's instructions. The sale of general office furniture initiated enquiries to produce special custom-built furniture such as board room tables, executive desks, reception desks, screens, planter boxes, filing cabinets, book cases and complete office fitouts.

Ricketts & Thorp produced a complete range of household furniture in their early years for Grace Bros, Beard Watsons and Bebarfalds. Bebarfalds catalogue 1928 shows several bedroom suites with names like Windsor, Cheval and Lorna that can be attributed to Ricketts & Thorp manufacture, and in association with Beard Watson they produced furniture for The British Empire Exhibition in London.

Ricketts and Thorp worked with several furniture designers and architects during the 1930's, most notable being Molly Grey and Fowell, McConnel & Mansfield, producing custom-built furniture in many exotic timbers and veneers, such as Italian burr walnut, Queensland walnut and English birch

During the late 1930s Ricketts and Thorp became involved in a price war supplying furniture to major retailers, and decided to go it alone, opening a showroom at the factory to sell directly to the public, thus by-passing retailers' mark-ups.

The showroom displayed the factory-produced bedroom, dining and lounge furniture of contemporary and period design, the best known of these being the Hepplewhite dining room suite of superbly crafted furniture in flare mahogany veneers and Honduras or sapele mahogany solids.

Extension tables on sabre leg pedestals were made to size. Hand finished arm and side chairs in the shield back style, a serpentine shaped sideboard with dovetailed drawers with cock beading were all beautifully finished with a dulled lacquer. The Queen Anne style of dining, bedroom and lounge furniture, tables, chairs, china cabinets, sideboards, occasional tables and lounge furniture were also popular.

The showroom had a full range of catalogue furniture including dining and bedroom suites and gift occasional furniture, such as nest of tables, lamp stands, pie crust wine tables, traymobiles and occasional chairs that were very popular around Christmas-time. These items were manufactured in small batch production (6-12-24-30) up to the finishing stage, kept in store until a customer's order and then polished and upholstered as required.

The 1950's saw a thriving company of about 180 employees producing contemporary furniture for the general public as well as commercial contracts. This contemporary furniture included Swedish style household furniture of plain-grained Queensland maple and African pear with tapered legs, rectangular or turned. A design change appeared with the grain being displayed horizontally instead of vertical. Other changes included the use of wooden integral handles and introduction of laminated plastics (Laminex and Formica) on the top surfaces, the edges being bevelled solid timber. A large contract for the Rural and Commonwealth Bank to furnish their Managers residences in branches throughout NSW allowed new materials and processes to be used.

Flat panel construction, using plywood, solid core and some early forms of chipboard instead of framed construction, was utilised as the latter was very labour intensive. In fact in the latter part of the 50's labour costs outstripped material cost and any savings in labour were essential. The use of chipboard saw exciting times as changes in processes, assembly devices and hinges were introduced, as older methods proving unsuitable for this new material.

An important part of Ricketts & Thorp's production was their custom-built, one-off furniture. Many of these designs came from interior designers or architects drawings, or from small sketches, or a visit

by sales staff to the client. The drawing office would produce presentation drawings when required and supply quotations. Many designs were submitted for quotation, with estimators assessing material and labour costs based on experience and previous work, sometimes only receiving about 15% of jobs quoted for. However, the work obtained was a very high quality for discerning clients and provided new opportunities in design and use of materials.

On receiving the client order, a factory working drawing and cutting list was produced, with the article taking about 6-8 weeks to produce in the factory. This work was most sought after by tradesmen and apprentices, sometimes leading to many days out on site installing the furniture.

One achievement, believe it or not, was a 25 ft.x 10 ft. (7.5 m X 3 m) board table for the old AMP Insurance building at Circular Quay. Delivery posed a problem as the top was required to be made in one piece, veneered in Queensland Walnut, but this was overcome by it being crated and hoisted up the outside of the building and lowered to the 25th floor before the roof went on.

As it was irregularly shaped it had to be placed in the correct position. Several months later tradesmen from the firm assembled the table base on site, unpacked the table-top and the final polish was completed. The client has since built a new head office but decided to leave the table where it was.

Second generation and even third generation families returning (quite a few from the country during Easter Show Week) returning to purchase furniture is another testimony to the quality. One client from the south coast had a cedar tree on their property felled, and Ricketts and Thorp cut and seasoned the timber and produced a full bedroom suite, which is at present still with the family in immaculate condition.

In the 1960's another showroom, especially targeting office furniture, was opened in North Sydney and when Mr Reg Adams from H. Adams & Sons, Cabinetmakers of Leichhardt, joined the firm, the company saw an increase in orders for church and school projects, such as science laboratory benches and furniture and church pews.

Below are a few clients and projects of Ricketts and Thorp showing in what high regard the company was held by the community:

- Commonwealth, Rural and Commercial Bank and Reserve Bank offices in Sydney, Canberra and Darwin
- National Library Canberra, High Court Canberra, Prime Minister's residences Canberra and Sydney
- Government House, Sydney, State Library, Commonwealth and State Department of Public Works, State Railways.
- AMP, Mercantile Mutual, CSR, Law Society, NRMA, Ord & Minnett, Norwich Union, Unilever, Custom Credit, Australian Club, Sydney University, Knox Grammar School, Sydney Town Hall, Metropole Hotel, Cahill Restaurants, Norton Smith, Pechiney, Burns Philp.
- Wollongong Town Hall, Many Shire Council Chambers, St Andrews & St Marys Cathedral and many churches in NSW
- Designers: Marion Hall Best, Artes Studios, Stuart Lowe Furniture Studios; Bill Greenwood, Frederick Ward, Edmund Dykes, Bill Johnstone.
- Architects: Peddle Thorp & Walker, Fowell McConnell, Hirst & Kennedy, Maclurcan & Brown, Kevin Curtin & Mansfield, Government Architects.



## **WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT THEIR FURNITURE?**

Furniture manufactured at Ricketts & Thorp since 1912 is still attracting high prices in the antique trade. At a recent auction of furniture offering a Ricketts & Thorp Pty Ltd 954 Hepplewhite Extension table and carver and 5 dining chairs in Sapele Mahogany sold for \$30,000.00.

Solid timber was carefully selected for furniture made by Ricketts & Thorp.. On either side of the main factory huge stacks of timber were air-dried over several years, then dried to correct moisture content in a kiln. The timber was only used when any chance of such shrinking and cupping was at a minimum. Mahogany, Queensland maple and walnut, black bean, silver ash, Tasmanian Oak, English Oak, American oak, sycamore, beech, elm, coachwood, blackwood were just some of the timbers.

Wood veneers such as walnut, birch, maple, teak, flame mahogany, European burr, butt walnuts and sycamore, were a feature of many pieces of furniture. The veneers were carefully matched and laid into panels..

Some processes and high class trade practices are evident in Ricketts & Thorp furniture. Drawers were machined dovetailed front and back. If the backs of the drawers were housed in, triangular glue blocks were added to strengthen the joint. Blocks were also used below the drawer bottom, glued to the sides to hold the bottom rigid and prevent any joints coming loose with constant use.

Hidden or construction rails inside of cabinets were made out of good quality cabinet timber, usually coachwood, of a generous size. The drawer bottoms and cabinet backs of plywood were securely fixed in. Techniques, such as rebates and tongue and grooves maintained cabinet strength.

Chairs always had neatly cut, sanded and fitted brackets in the joints between legs and rails, and the underside of chair seats were neatly finished with white or brown calico. Quality control was evident at every stage of the process. One only has to look at the inside or underside of a piece of furniture to see it has been given the same care as the outside. Nitrocellulose lacquer finishes on carefully sanded surfaces provided quality of surface that lasted for years. Only the best hardware, carefully considered for style and finish, and quality brass butt hinges and brass double ball catches were used.

## **THE CLOSING**

With labour costs getting higher it became increasingly difficult to maintain the firms high standard and the two family shareholding group reluctantly made the decision to close down. Outstanding orders were nearing completion, and a three-day auction sale was held on 6-8 September 1977 to dispose of furniture, plant and equipment.

As the news of the imminent close-down spread, there were many expressions of regret and of gratitude from customers, ex-employees and friends who came to the auction sale for one last look around, as one client said "It's the end of an era"

During 1978 post and rail furniture moved into part of the premises with a phone company using the Princes Highway frontage. It is now a rent a storage company.

P.S. A Ricketts & Thorp re-union was held on 2nd February 1996 in which 180 ex-employees and partners attended to relive the days of R&T at Rockdale.



Catalogues 1960

Gift catalogue with small items

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My thanks to Mr Brian Ricketts for his time and assistance in supplying information, photographs and articles.

## ABOUT THE WRITER, MR. ALAN PERRY

### COMMITTEE MEMBER, FURNITURE HISTORY SOCIETY.

Started at Ricketts & Thorp in 1954 at the age of 15½ years as a "floor boy" on three months probation. Swept the floor, cleaned the animal glue pots and was a "gofer" and assistant to the tradesmen. He subsequently became an apprenticed cabinetmaker, one of 180 employees in the factory at Rockdale. Earning £1.10.6 per week. Alan worked in the sewing machine cabinet section until graduating to cabinet section. He then became a draughtsman and eventually became Furniture Designer, Estimator and Site Supervisor until joining TAFE in 1973 as a Teacher of Cabinetmaking. Teaching all ages of apprentices and tradesman in colleges in Sydney and a year at London College of Furniture becoming Head Teacher of Cabinetmaking at Lidcombe TAFE, ( retiring in 1998).

## BEXLEY METHODIST CONGREGATION A BUILDING OF ITS OWN A LAST

Grateful though newly formed Bexley Methodist congregation was for the generous use, from 26 January 1902, of the newly built Bexley Municipal Council Chambers, the members looked forward to having their own church building, having taken the first step in about June 1902 of “securing” the land they needed – the “choice allotment” upon which the first building now stands.

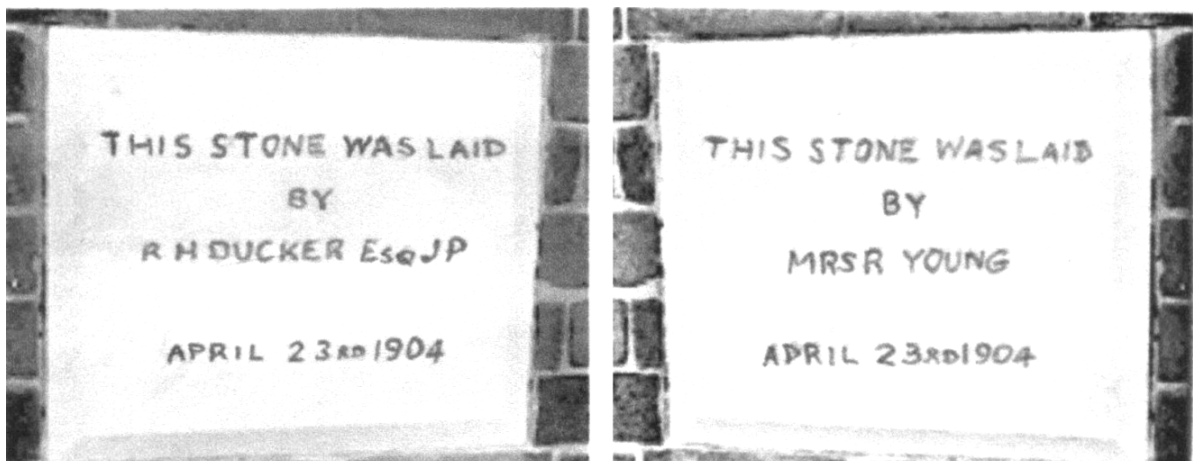
Early in 1903 Rev JW Moore, negotiated a load of £103 covering the price of the 2 blocks of land, and associated expenses, in Gladstone Street. In June of that year it was decided that their new church would be brick, that they could manage a cost of £350 and would seek a church loan of £300. In fact, 9 months later, when tenders were invited, the price had become £400. However, they went ahead.

The two foundation stones were laid during the afternoon of Saturday, 23 April 1904. It was not a ‘backwater’ affair. No less than the Lord Mayor of Sydney and the Presidents of both the National and NSW Conferences were present, having arrived with several other dignitaries, at Rockdale on the 2:30pm train. They were “*met by Rev M Maddern (Rockdale Circuit Minister) and Mr. John Graham (a Bexley Trustee) and driven to the ground in carriages*”.

One of those dignitaries was Rowland H Ducker Esq. who laid one of the two Foundation Stones. While the selection of Mr. Ducker was a mystery at that time of Bexley Congregation’s Centenary in 2002 some light has since been thrown on the matter. His obituary in the Methodist (27 Sept 1913) reveals that he was a highly respected man, both within the Methodist Church as “*a devout worshipper, a loyal helper and a generous giver*” and within business and banking circles, particularly for “*his knowledge of property affairs*”. A clue to the reason he was invited lies in his contribution to the wider Methodist Church. “*For a quarter of a century he occupied a seat on our principal connexional committees and was Lay Treasurer of the Loan Funds for a considerable time.*” This position would have brought him into negotiations with Bexley Methodist Trust and herein lies the probable reason for his invitation.

The other Foundation Stone was “*placed in position by Mrs. Richard Young of Homebush, declaring it to be well and truly laid in the Name of the Trinity.*” Following the presentation of flowers to Mrs. Young her son responded thanking the Trustees for the honour they had conferred upon her. “*Like her husband, and her father and mother before her, she was a Methodist and watched with pleasure the growth and prosperity of the (Methodist) Church in which she had been brought up from childhood.*” Mr Ducker in his response said “*he felt it a distinction to be associated with the elect lady, Mrs. Young, in the stone laying ceremonies...*”

“The value of the honour was enhanced by their names being engraved on the stones and thus handed on to prosperity.”



Mr. Richard Young was *“born in West Maitland (dying in 1893) and commanded wide-spread respect for a life that was singularly unselfish and successful. ... By his counsel, his influence and his support he was a tower of strength to the Church, of which he was a conspicuous ornament.”* Mrs. Young, his wife, was therefore a member of a long established and greatly respected and this may answer the question. *“Why was Mrs. Richard Young invited to lay one of the Foundation Stones?”*

A quaint custom was enacted at the ceremony. An invitation was given to those gathered to place contributions on the two Foundation Stones as the Sunday School children sang the *“Sunbeam Song”* and then *“... suiting the action to the word (the children) laid a contribution on the stones which they had raised at a Doll Fair on the previous Saturday.”* Altogether £55 was contributed, *“a goodly and generous response indeed.”*

*“The musical conductor at this stone laying ceremony was Mr. S.F. Berry and the organist Miss Taylor. Mr. H. E. Berringham, the secretary of the Trust and the local Trustees and all those associated with them worked well to ensure success for the new undertaking.”*

The new church was completed in 3 months, being dedicated on Saturday, 2 July 1904 in the presence of *“a numerous company of worshipers, assembles from all parts of the circuit.”* Once again Rev. Dr. George Lane, President of the National Conference preached the sermon based on the building and dedication of Solomon’s Temple. Both Mrs. R. Young and Mr. R. H. Ducker were in attendance and each was presented with *“a framed bromide enlargement of the church, taken by the circuit minister.”* *“The new church is a neat brick structure, 24 ft by 34 ft, with a wood back wall, to admit of enlargement when required. It will seat one hundred and sixty people.”*

The original church served the worshiping needs of the Methodists of Bexley and the Sunday School Scholars for 22 years until it could no longer cope with the increase in numbers. And so a new and larger church was built next to it on 2 adjacent blocks of land the trust was fortunate to be able to buy. The original church became the much needed Hall with the wooden Kindergarten built at the back of the property in 1914. Over the years, a stage was added, which was much later rebuilt, a kitchen replaced the church porch and a new entrance was added. At the centenary of the congregation in 2002 a ramp was constructed for wheelchair entry. Despite the changes, the original building is clearly identifiable. It has served the congregation well over its one hundred years.

On the weekend, 3-4 July 2004 the Bexley Uniting Church congregation celebrated the centenary of the dedication of the first church building with a public concert and the first Service held in the new church with a special Service of Worship at which a Cross was mounted on the front wall of the original church was dedicated.

J. N. Pendlebury

Chairman of the Congregation



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

## INCOME & EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDING June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2004

### INCOME

Balance b/f  
Membership Subs  
  
Total Donations  
Sale of Books  
Income from Tours  
Raffles  
R.A.H.S. refund  
R.A.H.S. grant  
History House  
Less tour expenses

1,197.68  
588.00  
  
242.00  
232.50  
355.00  
91.00  
207.00  
200.00  
28.60  
52.00  

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1,892.10

### EXPENDITURE

R.A.H.S. 2003/04 Insurance  
St. George Transport  
Office Fair Trading  
R.A.H.S. Registration  
Petty Cash  
Bexley Stall  
Expenses for Gifts & Raffles  
R.A.H.S. Insurance  
Conference  
Accomodation  
Bulk Postage  
Contra Donation

630.30  
193.60  
63.00  
86.00  
50.00  
20.00  
90.75  
665.00  
100.00  
160.00  
285.00  
50.00

Interest

2.62

less unpresented cheques  
000112 78.45  
000114 2.40

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80.85  
2,474.50

Balance in Bank

617.90

Total

\$ 3,092.40

Total

\$ 3,092.40

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

L. Thompson.