

St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

SEPTEMBER - DECEMBER EDITION

Christmas is coming



Christmas is coming,
The geese are getting fat,
Please to put a penny in an old man's hat.
If you haven't got a penny,
A half-penny will do,
If you haven't got a half-penny,
God bless you!

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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 - DECEMBER EVENTS AGENDA

Sept 17 HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Sept 18 HISTORIC WALK – NATIONAL TRUST

This will be held in the Bexley area, starting at 9am and ending at Lydham Hall for afternoon tea. For information contact Bernard Sharah (02) 9567 – 8989.

Oct 15 HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Guest speaker will be Daphne Kingston on “Early Historic Buildings of the St. George District”

Nov 6 ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY – SAUSAGE SIZZLE

The St. George Historical Society will be holding a sausage sizzle at Bunnings Warehouse in West Botany Street, Rockdale, starting at 8:30am. Helpers are needed. For information contact Bernard Sharah (02) 9567 – 8989.

Nov 19 HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING

Guest speaker will be Peter Sage with slides on “Sydney Harbour”

A tour of Sydney Harbour – illustrating bays, backwaters, tributaries, shipping and history of this magnificent and world renowned waterway.

Dec 4 ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY – CHRISTMAS PARTY

This will be held at Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Avenue, Bexley, starting at 12:00pm till 4:00pm. Please bring a plate and Gentlemen can bring soft-drinks, lollies and nuts.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

I take this opportunity to thank our Past President, Bernard Sharah, and all those who have held Office this past year for a job well done.

I am honoured to once again be the President of the St. George Historical Society Inc. especially as we have some important dates ahead in which we can celebrate and encourage others to join with us and find the same pleasure in our activities.

The 35th Anniversary in 2006 of Lydham Hall will be held to commemorate its opening to the Public through the generosity of Rockdale City Council having purchased this lovely old home in October 1970 and allowing the Society to use it as their Museum from the time of the Official Opening February 22nd, 1971. Having been built around early 1860's Lydham Hall is a wonderful asset to Rockdale's history. Without Mr. Rathbone's leadership and Bet Otton as its Caretaker and the very early Members of that time working so hard in getting it in order internally and outfitting it over the years with its many and varied displays of furniture and accessories, it would not be the thing of beauty visitors see today. Of course the loan of most of the furniture downstairs has been due to generosity of the National Trust and for this we are most thankful.

However, besides the above, there will also be Heritage Week which I believe is from April 1st to 16th 2006 with a theme of "Industrial Heritage - Our Working Lives" being ideal for the wide and varied background of St. George. Then our Historical Society will celebrate the 45th year of its formation next June and for this we must once again give thanks to the foresight of those early Members.

Of course Lydham Hall will also be upholding next year the celebration of Christina Stead's birthday at a convenient time around July 17th - more will be heard from the Lydham Hall Committee on this. The Stead family, consisting of, at that time, David Stead his new wife Ada (nee Gibbins of "Dapetto" fame) and four year old Christina, who moved to Lydham Hall New Year's Day 1907 so January after next (2007) one hundred years will have passed since then.

The St. George Historical Society Inc. will be having a Sausage Sizzle courtesy of Bunning's Rockdale for their generosity in their Car park November 6th and also the Society and Lydham Hall Committee will be having a Book Stall at Kingsgrove Uniting Church Friday evening August 12th and Saturday morning 13th as well as a Stall at the Bexley Fair Saturday September 3rd. Do come along and say hello and support these activities and keep an eye on your Bulletin for any changes in dates and times. As you know the Society Meetings are held 2pm upstairs above the Library at Rockdale Town Hall the third Saturday in the month and we have many interesting Speakers on these occasions. Also Bernard Sharah will be giving a Walk and Talk at 1.30pm Sunday September 18th commencing at Christ Church, Dunmore St. Bexley ending with afternoon tea at Lydham Hall. Hope to see you there.

Bettye Ross

EDITORIAL 2005

Firstly we would like to welcome back Mrs. Bettye Ross as President, and as you have already read in her report, she has many things planned for the coming year in our Society.

We are sorry to report that the "Fete" at "Kingsgrove Uniting Church" was very disappointing this year.

The "Bexley Spring Fair" was more successful. It was attended by a lot of people, but it should be mentioned that many other events were being held on the same day, such as "The Kogarah Fair", "West Bexley Uniting Church Fete" and we really believe that the "Petrol situation" at the moment is having a larger effect than we realise on peoples spending patterns as a whole, and of course the fair was also followed by "Father's Day" the next day. We must also offer many thanks to Brian Madden who came to this event to sign copies of his Kingsgrove book.

At the August meeting of the St. George Historical Society our most interesting guest speaker was, local historian, Beverley Earnshaw, and she was assisted by Janette Hollebone. Her topic was "Australian Sculptor – William Priestly MacIntosh" and enlarged photos of some of his 84 works were shown. Beverley Earnshaw has recently written a book with the same title, as above, which is available locally at Kogarah Library.

Sadly, we have recently lost one of our dearest members, Mrs Betty Williams.

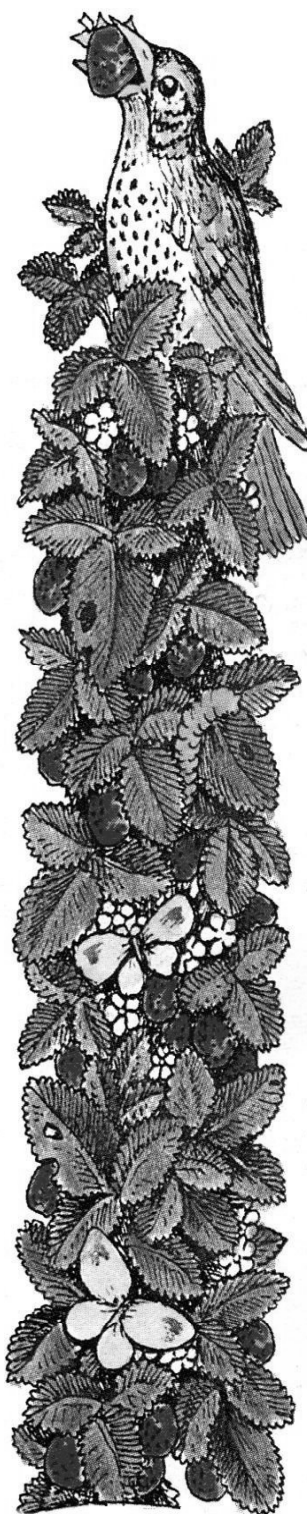
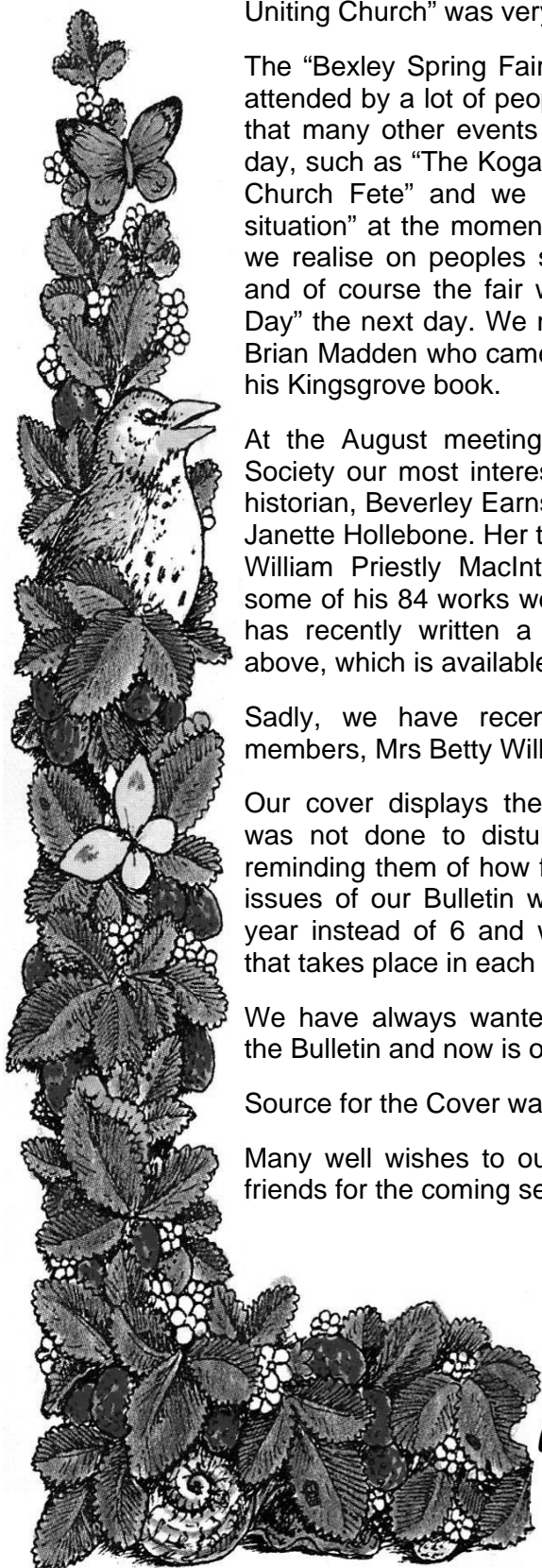
Our cover displays the "Coming of Christmas". This was not done to disturb our members in any way, reminding them of how fast the year has gone, but the issues of our Bulletin will now be released 4 times a year instead of 6 and we have to cover every event that takes place in each 3 month time frame.

We have always wanted to print BUMPER ISSUE in the Bulletin and now is our opportunity.

Source for the Cover was the Internet.

Many well wishes to our members, their families and friends for the coming season.

Merry Christmas
The Editors



SYDNEY'S GHOSTLY PAST

by Susan Miles

Manly's old quarantine station is not the most restful place to sleep but well worth an after-dark visit.

If you were one of those kids whose favorite part of a campout was being scared out of your wits with campfire ghost stories, (& you haven't quite grown out of it), have I got a tour for you!.

A short ferry ride from the landmark attractions of the Harbor Bridge and the Sydney Opera House is the beachside suburb of Manly. This is where Sydneysiders head for a Sunday outing to enjoy a surf, a swim or a stroll along the picturesque boardwalk of Manly beach. However for those with a ghostly fascination, Manly becomes all the more interesting just after sunset. For just a short 10 minute cab ride from the Manly Wharf, within the Sydney Harbour National Park, is the Historic Quarantine Station. From 1828 until as recently as 1973, the crews and passengers of arriving ships into Sydney harbour who carried infectious diseases, were held in Quarantine at Spring Cove, on Sydney Harbour's North Head. Starting as no more than a rough camp where passengers were required to pitch their own tents, the station evolved over time to include separate hospital, accommodation, stores and quarantine facilities.

During this period, over 11,000 people have passed through the Quarantine Station, with sadly over 500 never to leave. The site is home to 3 separate cemeteries where the victims of cholera, smallpox and plague epidemics that made their way to Australia's shore during the 1800's are buried.

In order to save the occupants of the Quarantine Station from the distressing sight of their fellow shipmates being laid to rest, burials were completed under the cover of darkness. Fear of infection saw these burials completed in haste and due to the quarantine laws in place, no visitors were allowed into the station, this included members of the clergy. These clandestine burials, without the tradition of a religious service, committal or last rights for the dying not surprisingly created legends and myths of unreleased souls in and around the Quarantine Station. It is these stories that provide the backdrop to the gas lamp lead nightly ghost tour over the grounds and through the historic buildings of the Quarantine Station.

The ghost stories come not just from the station's sad past but also from recent tours. But be warned, this is not a special effects enhanced, "out of work actor" lead tour. The guides are members of the New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service, who service not just the Quarantine Station but a range of historic sites in and around Sydney Harbour. Given the Australian predisposition to a healthy suspicious nature, the stories are shared in an honest, straightforward yet attention grabbing manner.

One of the first stops on our walking tour is in front of the former Chief Quarantine Officers residence. Repeated sightings have been made of a tweed dressed gentleman standing on this building's second floor balcony. Tour guides with their back to the residence note how an irrevocable silence suddenly falls over groups, with all eyes darting to a single spot on the balcony. A regular sighting is also known to occur at the nearby Gatehouse cottage. A tall man in a black hat and cape is often seen in the shadows of the cottage verandah. One of the station's Chief Officers, was a Dr Reid, a dapper gentleman with a fondness for tweed suits. He was also fond of the Opera, and would prepare for a concert in Sydney by donning an Opera Cape and matching black top hat. On these evenings he would wait for his handsome cab in the shelter of the gatehouse cottage's verandah. While not a victim of the plague or one of the infectious diseases brought to the Quarantine Station, Dr Reid lost his life during a collision between a ship and the ferry he was a passenger on one misty evening crossing the harbour. He has also been known to appear in the station's Morgue, but I will save this particular tale for the end!.

The hospital ward is another prime location for unexplainable sightings. Until recently the National Park Service also offered visitors to the Quarantine Station the unique experience of a sleepover on site. This took place in the old hospital building. This activity unfortunately had to be pulled from the schedule, apparently this is not the most restful location in Sydney to sleep!

Locked doors constantly opening in the middle of the night, and sightings of a “floating light” moving from bed to bed, were a tad off putting to some of the visitors and staff who choose to stay the night. The hospital, like the accommodation facilities, were divided on the same class lines as the visiting ships, with first and second class enjoying a greater comfort than those who had the misfortune to be both ill and from third class or from the ranks of the crew. Another unusual but amusing story from the hospital building comes from a previous nightly tour.

A particularly loud and irritating visitor made a number of disparaging comments about the standard of matrons housekeeping. His annoying interruptions were soon silenced however when he first found himself locked in the hospital's bathroom and then, experienced sharp stabbing pains in his back when he rested on one of the hospital beds. This particular tale was shared in a timely and affective manner by our guide to silence the over exuberant youths on our own tour!.

One of the more chilling stops on our walk is the shower block at the wharf entrance to the station. Each new arrival, whether they showed signs of infection or not, were required to go through this decontamination process. A soothing mix of water and fennel (carbolic acid) were the ingredients of this mandatory wash. One of the now retired tour guides (this appears to be repeating occurrence at the Quarantine Station!), experienced a silent, hovering intruder one night after returning to switch off the shower block lights. After calling for a response from this person standing unmoving in the building's doorway, the guide choose a more confronting approach, running head long at the doorway, and straight through.

But not all the stories shared on the ghost tour are so scary, some are just down right funny. Like the young local couple, who in an attempt to find a private beach, moved from one secluded cove to another until they finally wandered into the grounds of the Quarantine Station. In addition to having to deal with the embarrassment of being “discovered” by the station's staff, they had to endure the additional mortification of discovering the station was in a state of Quarantine and were therefore confined to the station for the duration.

But what of Dr Reid and the morgue?. This is a simple wooden building that makes an ideal setting for the guides to share one of the countless tales of strange and mysterious sightings. I noted with only passing interest through the window that the office section of the morgue had been dressed with a desk, chair and white-coated black-haired mannequin seated at the desk. Glancing back in the window as we were about to depart, I noticed the “mannequin” was no longer there. With no sense of a ghostly experience, it only occurred that I may have experienced something unusual when I noted a portrait of a jet black haired Dr Reid later in the station's former smoking room. I can only say I felt I got my money's worth with this enthralling and unusual night's entertainment!

Source : http://www.travelintelligence.net/wsd/articles/art_2999.html

Long Ago Tree



My mother had a Christmas tree,
But it was not like mine;
It had no lovely glowing balls,
Electric lights to shine;
It hadn't any tinsel bands,
That little tree she had,
Or shining silver icicles,
Or stars to make it glad!

But there were lights on mother's tree
For there were candles there,
All flickering in the branches green,
And spicing all the air;
And there were puffy popcorn ropes,
With cranberries between,
And oranges, and apples bright,
And cookies to be seen!

I wish that I had been there then,
To sniff the candle smell,
To see the snow-white popcorn ropes,
The oranges as well!
My mother would be standing there,
Aquiver with surprise -
A little girl in funny clothes,
With starlight in her eyes!

Source: Victoria – On being a mother

Submitted by Bettye Ross

A KISS UNDER THE MISTLETOE IS LUCKY

The following is taken from a book entitled OLD WIVES' TALES - The Truth about Everyday Myths, and was written by Peter Engel & Merrit Malloy and published by Bookman Press, 325 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, Victoria in 1993.

I don't know how to kiss or I would kiss you. Where do the noses go? In For Whom The Bell Tolls and spoken by Ingrid Bergman to Gary Cooper.



Hanging Mistletoe is one of our friendliest customs. It encourages us to be just a little sweeter to each other. So where did the custom come from?

According to Norse mythology, the goddess Frigg was so happy when her son Balder came back to life that her tears turned into pearls on the mistletoe. Because of this miracle, the mistletoe was placed under her protection, thereby preventing it from ever being used for evil purposes. Since Frigg is the goddess of love and marriage, kissing under her mistletoe involves protection for that love.

The mistletoe plant itself is a parasite of sorts that springs from seeds deposited by birds on the bark of trees. The woody "sinkers" insert into the host plant, from which it derives sustenance. It's said that the most magical of all mistletoe grows on oak trees. According to legend, the plant is to be cut with a gold knife or sickle. Don't let mistletoe touch the ground, or it will lose its magical powers.

The custom of kissing under the mistletoe came from the folklore of fertility practices. A woman kissed under the Mistletoe was assured of fertility. Mistletoe is still customarily used as a protection against evil.

The branches of mistletoe used to be attached to the doors of newlyweds to bring them happiness. We are warned never to take all the boughs off a mistletoe plant or it will bring bad luck. Legend also has it that if one hangs mistletoe in a tree with a swallow's wing, all the cuckoos in the area will assemble there.

Today we still believe that any unmarried girl who stands under a mistletoe and does not get kissed will not be married that year. And if she refuses to be kissed, she will die an old maid, thus robbing us of one more old wife to tell these tales.

Source: *Bettye Ross*

My Memory Garden

It's an enchanted place. Here, I can enjoy the tranquility of the present and recall the joys of yesteryear...

Sometimes there are days when life in Highgrove Old Folk's Home just gets too much for me. It's usually as a result of a fall-out with a fellow inhabitant over something trivial.

From time to time, we're all guilty of being cantankerous, selfish or just downright childish.

The reason is simple. There isn't enough for us to do and no one with whom to share our special memories.

It's on days like these that it seems as if we are the forgotten people: too old for the world outside.

In many cases, we have outlived our friends, our relatives and sometimes even tragically our children.

Nowadays, sharing memories is the only thing that makes life worthwhile.

And yet, there are so many things to be grateful for.

I can still hear and enjoy music. I can still see, and love reading, but somehow the books they write today are so silly. They all seem to be about weak people with no values.

I like the classic tales of great heroism, of men and women who overcome enormous obstacles.

There is one high point in my week – when one lady visitor brings her dog. I can never remember lady's name.

She's tall and fair, pretty and gentle, and takes time and

trouble to talk to those of us who want some company.

Her dog is wonderful. He's a big Golden Retriever, named Jason, with gentle, brown eyes, and though he is still quite young he always walks with dignity and sits quietly beside those of us who encourage him.

I stroke his warm body and am transported back to the days when I had my own dog, and walked for miles on the moors with him at my heels.

On fine days, when Jason isn't visiting, I retreat to my memory garden.

Nobody else ever comes here, which is fine, as I can sit and enjoy the bird song without having it overlaid by the chatter of human voices.

It's my enchanted place, my Eden where the lion lies down with the lamb.

Sounds silly? Maybe, but there, among the high plants where I sit on my wooden bench and watch the lily pool, a miracle happens.

There's a ginger and white cat in the Home. Her name is Persil, for reasons no-one has ever explained. Perhaps because her white fur is whiter than white.

She's a lovely animal and often curls up at the end of my bed or on my lap. There's nothing like a purring cat to make you feel at ease.

But Persil has one big fault. She's a bird killer, and often I find the tell-tale feathers that show

that, once more, some innocent creature has fallen victim.

Which is why I'm so fascinated by what happened beside the pool. There are Goldfish and Koi Carp, Tadpoles when the Spawn hatches, and ultimately little frogs galore.

But, best of all, if I sit very still and pretend I'm not there, the Herron comes down.

He's a lovely bird, with his long neck and grey wings and stalk-like legs.

He stands in the middle of the pool, so still that the first time I saw him I thought he was a statue.

I was so fascinated, it was some time before I realized we weren't alone – Persil was lying on the bank, watching him.

My heart seemed to skip a beat. Was she planning mayhem?

But the cat appeared entranced by the big bird, or perhaps she realized she was out-matched. Perhaps she even thought it a statue, though when the beak dived swiftly into the water at the end of a snakelike neck, surely she realized it was alive.

Whatever her reasons, she simply lay and watched.

Now, both creatures are often there at the same time. And Persil remains as fascinated as ever.

It's quite an absurd scene, really, for there's also a little stone boy who watches

unblinkingly and two garden gnomes who grin at each other.

In the pool, lives a very elderly carp – I call him the grandfather fish – perhaps he's too big for the Herron to catch because he survives, and grows, and sometimes surfaces with a splash startling all of us.

It's so peaceful here I can sit in the sunshine and remember. The Herron triggers the memories.

We had three children, Mary and I. It's nearly 30 years since she died yet I still miss her.

I'm almost 100 now – only two years to go. I hope I survive to receive a telegraph from the Queen... A major landmark in any life.

Sadly, none of my family will share that day. They all went before me.

Oh, I have two grandchildren and three great-grandchildren but they all live abroad. I get letters and cards but its not the same as visits

* * * *

Sixty years ago – just thinking that makes me feel even older – when the children were young, Mary and I took them boating.

We all loved Herron's and there were large colonies in the trees along the Menai Straits, which separate Anglesey from the mainland.

One particular day, we anchored in a quiet place so we could watch the Herron's.

Some were on the beach, some fishing in the rock pools

and others at the edge of the sea. Some were also in their nests.

It was one of those rare scorching days when it was almost too hot to be pleasant.

The children were fascinated because each nest had its guardian, brooding over the young, wings-outspread to keep off the sun.

All were well protected, except for one, where some bird had built unwisely.

Both parents were absent, and the baby looked as if it were already suffering for it lay with its head drooping over the edge of the nest,

We all prayed for the mother to come back. Then two boats drew up beside us, radios blaring, people shouting.

Two dinghies rode ashore and children spilled on the beach, where they ran and threw stones into the sea.

The Herron's vanished. Those in the trees, stayed still. Those on their way back, hid in the woods.

We left soon after as it was too noisy and we couldn't see the Herron's anymore.

We found another anchorage, more hidden, so that we could be alone, but there were no birds except for the raucous gulls.

We wondered for days, whether the little one survived but it's doubtful. He had neither food nor shelter from the extreme heat and was not yet fully fledged.

A few days later, we were fishing from the shore. We all stopped, fascinated, as farther along the beach, two Herron's were fishing with their babies.

The Mackerel were shoaling, driving the tiny fish into the edge of the sand so that the foam was rich with booty.

The little Herron's were entranced. They fished until they could eat no more than then continued fishing so that the small heap of silver grew beside each bird.

It must have been their first sortie.

As dusk approached, the parents flew off across the water, calling but the babies continued fishing, refusing to leave.

The adults, halfway across, realized their 2 youngsters were not with them and returned, landing on the beach, striking at their rebellious offspring with beak and wing.

We watched them shivvy the young birds back to the nest.

The children laughed. "See", Mary said, "Not even baby Herron's get away with being naughty, if they didn't go home, a fox might get them."

"Their parents were making sure that they both survived... and learned."

Our children never forgot that lesson. If ever they were being difficult, their mother only had to say, "Remember the Herron's – Their parents knew best," and they would then, at least, listen to reason, thought they may not, in the end, agree with us.

Now, watching the solitary bird in the pool, I remember that day and laugh again.

I can still see the beach, and the piles of silvery fish, and marvel that the young of every species can be so greedy that they'll take more than they can possibly want, without heed.

Dosing in the sunshine, I often dream that I'm young again, back with Mary and the children, watching the Herron's

high in the trees.

Sometimes a small ginger and white body leaps lightly onto my lap, and the two of us sit, content, Persil's purr drowning the bird song.

I know my time is short, but it heartens me to realize that even when I'm gone, the garden will still be here.

Perhaps someone else will sit on my bench, enjoying the view, recalling forgotten pleasures and remembered times long ago.

Perhaps those walking in the garden will catch a fleeting glimpse of a figure sitting very still on the wooden bench, watching the pool.

They may think their eyes are deceiving them when they look again and the figure is gone.

But it will be me, returning to the place I love to recapture past joys and, most of all, to remember the Herrons...

*Written by Joyce Stranger
1997 copy of My Weekly English*



Illustration by Mark Viney

"Eternity" the Story of the Homeless Man in Sydney, Australia, who Went Down in History!

Beginning in the 1930s Arthur Stace spent his early morning hours writing the word "Eternity" in a distinctive cursive style in every doorway, on every street, and major entrance to a public area that he could find in Sydney.

For years, the citizens of the city wondered who was writing the "one word sermon" and why. Every once in a while, someone would claim responsibility for the graffiti and the newspapers would print the stories.

In 1956, Stace was a member of the Burton Street Baptist Church, where he also served as the janitor and a prayer leader.

One day, the pastor of the church, Rev. Lisle M. Thompson, stumbled across Stace while he was writing his chalk message on a sidewalk and the mystery of the "Eternity" messages all over Sydney was solved.

Stace said that after his conversion to Christianity, he heard a sermon in which the evangelist said "Eternity! Eternity! Oh, that this word could be emblazoned across the streets of Sydney!" In his simple way, Stace decided to do that.

There is a huge illuminated sign on the Sydney Harbour Bridge that says "Eternity" in Trace's distinctive handwriting, a sign that was clearly seen by hundreds of millions of people during the fireworks display at the end of the opening ceremonies at the Olympics in Sydney in 2000.

Source: <http://www.truthorfiction.com/rumors/s/stace.htm>



NEEDED



We the Editors of the St. George Historical Society Inc. are always interested in receiving Articles and Photographs of historic value to put in this Bulletin.

Please either mail them to

The Editors

St. George Historical Society Inc.

27 Waratah Street,
Bexley, NSW 2207

Or email them to

gloriahenke@yahoo.com.au or richardhenke27@yahoo.com.au

Or phone us on

(02) 9587-8307

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
PRICE LIST FOR BOOKS

No. 1 - The Early History - The Wolli Creek Valley	\$ 4.00
No. 2 - The Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway	\$ 4.00
No. 3 - Saywells Tramway 1887 - 1914 Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach	\$ 4.00
No. 4 - The Arncliffe to Bexley Steam Tramway	\$ 4.00
No. 5 - Our Heritage in Stone	\$ 4.00
No. 6 - All Stations to Como	\$ 4.00
No. 7 - Tempe and the Black Creek Valley	\$ 4.00
No. 8 - Early Churches of the St. George District	\$ 4.00
No. 9 - Early Settlers of the St. George District - Volume 1	\$ 4.00
No. 10 - Early Settlers of the St. George District - Volume 2	\$ 4.00
A Village Called Arncliffe	\$ 25.00
Brighton Le Sands	\$ 25.00
Christina Stead - (Jennifer Gribble)	\$ 10.00
Guild Theatre - 30 Fabulous Years	\$ 4.00
History of the Rockdale Uniting Church - 150th Anniversary (1855-2005)	\$ 15.00
Kingsgrove The First 200 Years	\$ 20.00
St. George Pictorial	\$ 25.00
Sutherland Shire Pictorial Memories	\$ 25.00
The Bardwell Valley	\$ 25.00
The Bexley Book	\$ 15.00
The Glenn Village – The First 25 years – Ron Rathbone's latest book	\$ 7.00
The Illawarra Railway - Hurstville	\$ 4.00
The Lydham Hall Booklet	\$ 6.00
The Sans Souci Peninsula	\$ 26.00

These books can be purchased at Lydham Hall.

A TRIBUTE TO THE LIFE OF BETTY ALISON WILLIAMS 1927-2005



Betty was born in the Sydney suburb of Banksia on 26th April, 1927 the first child of Raymond and Jessie Spargo. Her parents had lived in the St George District for some years, where her father was a well known master builder. Around 1929 the family moved to Arncliffe and in 1932 Betty commenced school at Arncliffe West Infants, followed by Arncliffe Primary School. She completed her education at Marrickville Girls' High School in 1941. During the war years her family attended the Arncliffe Methodist Church in Wollongong Road where for awhile Betty taught Sunday School.

On completion of her schooling, Betty worked in the Sydney office of Mick Simmonds until 1943, then after a short stint in the Womens Land Army at Batlow NSW, to assist the war effort, she found employment with the Sydney firm of Bennett & Wood. Upon reaching her 18th birthday, Betty joined the Womens Royal Australian Navy, and after initial training, was transferred to Canberra to HMAS Harman to work as a teleprinter operator in the Signals Branch for the next two years.

Following her discharge from the Navy into civilian life, Betty became private secretary to the Chief Petty Officer at Balmoral Naval Base a position she held for some years until her marriage in 1949. Betty's husband was a leading seaman in the R.A.N. and was frequently away on naval service, so that she spent many years as a Navy wife. During the next five years she became a mother to their three children, Wendy, Geoffrey and Brenda. While waiting to purchase their first home, the family had moved back to Arncliffe to live with Betty's parents, when she became ill with polio. Fortunately with early diagnosis and treatment, she made a complete recovery.

In later years, with her children at school, Betty returned to her former occupation of secretarial work and was highly regarded by all those who employed her, for her dedication and commitment. Over time, following changed family circumstances, ill health and the tragic death of her daughter Wendy in a car accident, Betty decided to move to Queensland. Working there for some years, until a job transfer made possible a return to Sydney. The early 1990's brought a well earned retirement, and move to Marsfield. Here, she began attending the Chatswood Baptist Church, accepting the position of secretary of the Ladies Fellowship and was involved in Leisure Group. She was also a Research Officer with the St. George Historical Society, and a member of the R.S.L. and ex W.R.A.N.S. and Land Army Associations.

Betty had many and varied interests, especially family history, a task which took her some years of painstaking research both in Australia and overseas. She enjoyed letter writing, maintaining a large correspondence. Betty had a quiet faith from which she drew strength, and her natural spontaneity and friendliness, attracted people to her. Sadly, continuing ill health in her latter years, forced her to withdraw from much of her involvements with the various groups. Betty passed away on 27th April 2005. Her funeral at Chatswood Baptist Church, revealed a large gathering of family and friends who paid tribute to her love, kindness and friendship over her lifetime. Betty was no stranger to illness, sadness and tragedy, yet she remained positive and courageous even in the face of her last illness. Betty is survived by a son and daughter, seven grandchildren, five great grandchildren.

Her memory lives on with those who knew and loved her.

The SPARGO family had long connections with Arncliffe. Betty's grandmother, Mrs. Martha Spargo a widow, returned to Australia from New Zealand with her four daughters to settle in 1911. Her five sons had already migrated here some years before. Martha Spargo lived at "Doris" Railway Crescent, Arncliffe until the end of World War 1. Although having no formal nursing training, she assisted women in childbirth delivering many babies in the District, and was well known for her kindness and care.

Source: Marjorie C. Mercer. Springwood, NSW 2005.

(Betty Williams' Sister)