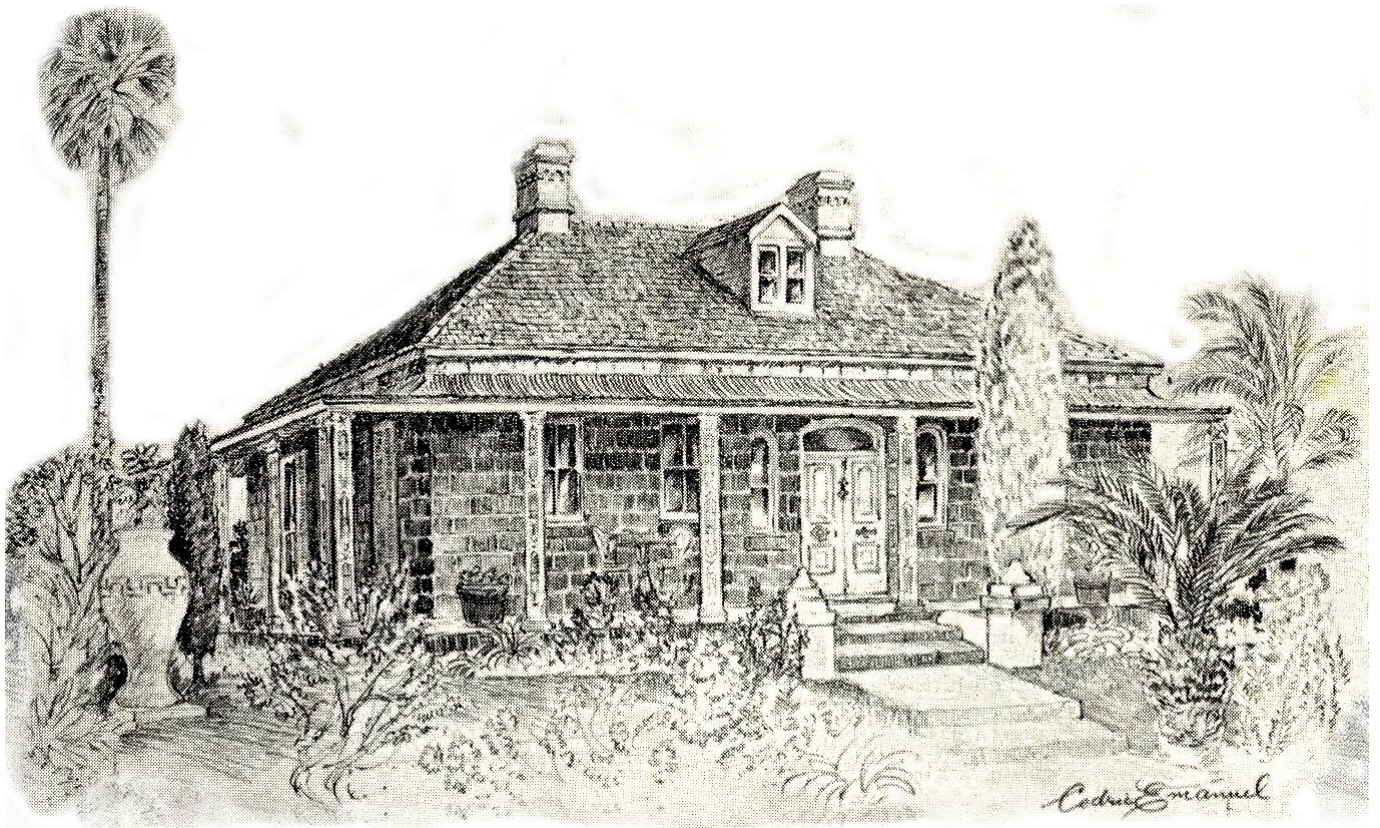


St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

JANUARY - MARCH EDITION

*The 35th Anniversary of St. George
Historical Society Museum.
“Lydham Hall”*



PRESIDENT	Mrs. Bettye Ross	(02) 9545 - 0445
SECRETARY	Mrs. Valda Beehag	(02) 9546 - 2819
TREASURER	Mr. Wesley Fairhall	(02) 9546 - 5555
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT	Mr. Bernard Sharah	(02) 9567 - 8989
VICE PRESIDENT	Mr. Alf Edwards	(02) 9521 - 4459
RESEARCH OFFICERS	Mrs. Bettye Ross	(02) 9545 - 0445
	Mrs. Norrene Burns	(02) 9546 - 1165
SOCIAL SECRETARY	Mrs. Joan Fairhall	(02) 9546 - 5555
PUBLICITY OFFICER	Mr. Bernard Sharah	(02) 9567 - 8989
BULLETIN EDITOR	The Henke Family	(02) 9587 - 8307
	Mrs. Gloria Henke	(02) 9587 - 8307
	Mrs. Joan Rankin	(02) 9567 - 8641
LYDHAM HALL COMMITTEE	Mr. Bernard Sharah	(02) 9567 - 8989
	Mr. Robert McGarn	(02) 9588 - 1097
PUBLIC OFFICER	Mr. Robert McGarn	(02) 9588 - 1097
REFRESHMENTS OFFICER	Mr. Allan Stahl	(02) 9556 - 2805
LYDHAM HALL ROSTER	Mr. Bernard Sharah	(02) 9567 - 8989
AUDITOR	Mrs. Joan Rankin	(02) 9567 - 8641

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.

JANUARY - MARCH EVENTS AGENDA

Feb 19 OPEN DAY AT LYDHAM HALL

To celebrate the opening of Lydham Hall as St. George Historical Society museum as this is the 35th year since it was opened. There will be a display. Light refreshments served.

12pm – 4pm,
Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Avenue, Bexley

Cost \$6.00
Phone: (02) 9567-4259

Apr 23 ST. GEORGES DAY

To celebrate St. Georges Day at Lydham Hall there will be a display. Light refreshments served.

12pm – 4pm,
Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Avenue, Bexley

Cost \$6.00
Phone: (02) 9567-4259



PRESIDENTS REPORT

NEW YEAR MESSAGE

I trust all Members of St. George Historical Society Inc. and their families have enjoyed the Festive Season and are looking forward to even better things for 2006. The weather I must admit is not enjoyable although the “surfies” would think otherwise but for one who travels on public transport which is not always air-conditioned and stands at bus stops and on Railway Stations in the sun and the heat I don’t mind when this humid summer finishes, but we have to bear what’s given to us. But! Isn’t autumn something to look forward to!

I hope you are also looking forward to another year of enjoyment with other Members either at our Meetings, or at Lydham Hall at some function. If we don’t see you however I wish everyone and their loved ones a Happy New Year.

Our first activity for the year will be our regular Meeting upstairs, above the Library Rockdale Town Hall Saturday the 18th February at 2 pm and the Speaker, Mr. Mc Aloon will speak on Pemberton Baths, Ramsgate on which he has undertaken a history.

Speaking of history Rockdale City Council has announced the Ron Rathbone Local History Prize for which entries must be in by Friday 5th May, 2006 and I believe will be judged by three separate persons and the winner or winners (as it can be shared by more than one entry) will be announced in July. Guidelines, Entry Forms and more information can be had from Rockdale City Library or by contacting Kirsten Broderick on (02) 9562-1821.

The 35th Anniversary of Rockdale City Council’s purchase of Historic Lydham Hall and its opening to the public as the Museum of St. George Historical Society will take place at Lydham Hall 18 Lydham Ave. Rockdale between 12 noon and 4 pm Sunday February 19th entry which includes refreshments will be \$6 for adults. A Display and Exhibition will be shown among other things to celebrate this great occasion.

Watch your next Bulletin for further information on St. George’s Day which will be held Lydham Hall Sunday April 23rd also celebrating the 171st Anniversary of Governor Major-General Sir Richard Bourke Proclaiming the Parish of St. George May 16th 1835. Named after the Patron Saint of England St. George’s Day is a fitting day on which to celebrate the origination of the Parish *“embracing the extensive stretch of almost virgin heavily timbered and scrubby country between Botany Bay, George’s River, Cook’s River and the old original road or track, to Bankstown from Sydney. Across its many square miles of area one or two timber getters’ tracks marked the only penetration by white settlers. Here and there in odd scattered places, hardy pioneer settlers lived/n their slab and bark huts, endeavouring to ‘tame’ the land they had taken up. Land for a farm could be had pretty well for the asking in those times, Crown Land being granted for a meagre ‘pepper-corn rental’ of a few shillings a year. In 1835 there could not have been more than fifty people living in the whole of St. George.”*

[quote from Article in ~ September 1976 Bulletin from The Propeller May 13, 1937]

Bettye Ross

T H E O P E N I N G O F L Y D H A M H A L L

2 0 ^{t h} F E B R U A R Y 1 9 7 1

It was Saturday afternoon 20th February 1971 the mid point of the Rockdale Council's two week celebration to commemorate its Centenary. Lydham Avenue had been closed off at both ends by the police and approximately two hundred chairs placed on the road and footpath to accommodate the invited guests.

Background music was supplied by the Public Service String Orchestra under the baton of Mr. John Short is and the proceedings were chaired by Alderman Barry Austin, President of the Lydham Hall Local Committee.

The only discordant note was that it was an exceptionally hot and sticky afternoon and whilst those sitting on the seats provided had their backs to the sun the Official Party experienced extreme discomfort as they were slowly baked especially the Mayor in his full regalia.

The first speaker was Philip Geeves, District Historian, who spoke at some length on "The Story of Lydham Hall" which was responded to by the former owner, Mr. George Long.

He, in turn, was followed by Mr. Ivor Wyatt, President of the National Trust, who congratulated Rockdale Council on acquiring the property to ensure its preservation.

The Mayor then introduced Sir Leslie Herron K.B.E. Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of N.S.W. who also addressed the gathering and unveiled the commemorative plaque before being thanked by Mr. Don Sinclair, President of the St. George Historical Society.

At that point Sir Leslie opened the door to Lydham Hall to the strains of The Lydham Hill Mazurka before an inspection of the building was undertaken and afternoon tea served on the back lawn.

Apart from the intense heat the function proceeded without a hitch.

One of the most interesting people present was Sir Hector Clayton M.L.C. Principal of the legal firm Clayton Utz. and Company whose family home "Myee" had adjoined Lydham Hall before the two estates were subdivided. He had played with the Davis children as a child and his reminiscences of the Davis Family proved to be most enlightening.

RON RATHBONE



Left: The Mayor Ron Rathbone addressing the gathering

Below: General view of the gathering at Lydham Hall (Umbrellas because of the



heat)

Right: Mrs. Lang and Sir Leslie Herron Who opened the building.

Below: Sir Leslie Herron addressing the gathering.



WHAT CONSTITUTES A PIONEER BUILDING ?

When an area is assessed for its heritage potential, it usually involves the expertise of two people. The first traces the phases through which the area has passed and the second lists what remains of each phase. The most important of these are the ones we refer to as the pioneer buildings. But what do we mean by a pioneer building?

The concept of a pioneer building varies from place to place but is generally considered to be a building erected before an area was incorporated as a Local Government Authority and Councils imposed conditions on buildings to ensure that they were structurally sound and provided a healthy living environment.

In the case of Rockdale, which was incorporated as the Municipal District of West Botany in February 1871, that would mean any building built before that date can be considered a pioneer building.

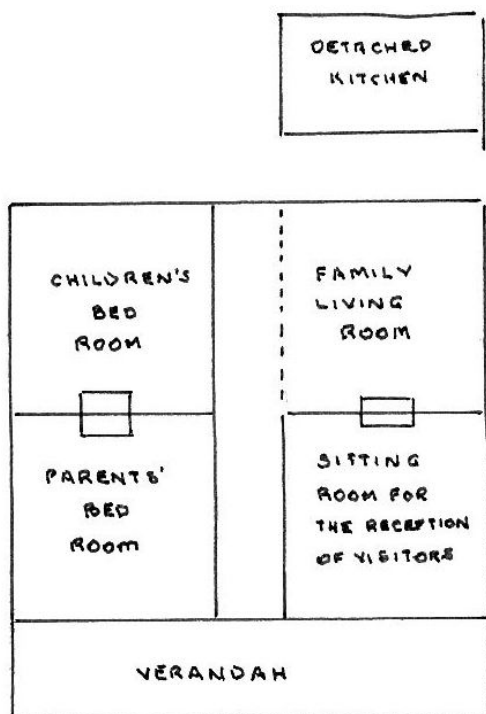
By far the best known of our pioneer buildings is Tempe House which was built in 1836 and is currently undergoing restoration of the most extensive and sensitive kind. How many other pioneer buildings do we still have standing in Rockdale and where are they located?

To date we have been able to identify twelve domestic buildings and one church that were built before 1871. Apart from Tempe House they are Lydham Hall in Lydham Avenue Rockdale, Forsyth in Hannam Street Bardwell Valley, Mill Cottage in John Street Bardwell Valley, Pembroke Cottage in Bennett Street Kingsgrove, Hilisdon's Farm House in Slade Road Bardwell Park, Banbury Cottage in Chandler Street Kogarah, Wilson's Farm House in West Botany Street Rockdale, John Downey's Cottage in Downey Street West Bexley, John Fry's Cottage in Robertson Street West Kogarah, George Perry's home No. 666 Forest Road South Bexley and Charles Amey Howard's residence in Stoney Creek Road Kingsgrove. The church is the Rockdale Uniting Church, formerly the West Botany Wesleyan Methodist Church which has just celebrated its 150th Anniversary.

There must, of course, be other buildings or parts of buildings but these are the ones that have been positively identified as having been built before 1871.

Although each of the above buildings is different in appearance and size and is constructed from a variety of materials they all consist of the same basic characteristics. All were originally single storey; all contain four rooms and all were built with a detached kitchen.

The kitchen invariably had a stone or pressed earth floor and was detached in case it caught fire. In such a situation only the kitchen was destroyed and not the whole house.



Whether it was an architect designed palladian villa, such as Tempe House, an imposing sandstone mansion like Lydham Hall or a humble painted brick domestic cottage the floor plan remained the same.

The second oldest pioneer building standing in the City of Rockdale is Pembroke Cottage at 9 Bennett Street Kingsgrove. Only Tempe House has been more thoroughly researched than this building and no building has been more completely misunderstood.

In the early 1960's I was a teacher at Kingsgrove Public School and it was a compulsory exercise to take your class for a walk along Bennett Street when doing the history of the area to "view the home of Hannah Laycock, the first

European resident of Kingsgrove and the lady who gave Kingsgrove its name". The only trouble was, Hannah Laycock's cottage, which had been demolished many years before, had been erected in the present day suburb of Clemton Park more than two and a half kilometres away so not only was it not there any more but had never at any time been located in Kingsgrove.

Another story was that Pembroke Cottage was used by Governor Philip Gidley King, the man who granted Hannah Laycock this land in the first place, as a hunting lodge despite the fact that there is no evidence written or verbal that Governor King ever visited the area.

All that notwithstanding, Governor King did grant Mrs. Hannah Laycock 500 acres of land on either side of Wolli Creek in August 1804 which today would encompass much of the suburb of Kingsgrove and she, in turn, called the area King's Grove as an act of appreciation for the grant she had been given.

Pembroke Cottage, was built in 1844 by Thomas Spencer West a former storekeeper, dealer and publican of Kent Street Sydney who had purchased the land on which it stood two years earlier. West had come to Australia as a free settler in 1821.

West's occupation of Pembroke Cottage was somewhat spasmodic and he appears to have spent long periods during his ownership back in the City while the cottage was lived in by various members of his family. He died at Pembroke Cottage in 1856.

The house is constructed of solid hand made bricks which were kept painted to keep out the dampness and over the 160 plus years of its existence the roof has been raised to allow for extra rooms in the roof cavity and an unsympathetic addition has been added to the northern side of the building. Entry to the house was originally gained from Stoney Creek Road not from Bennett Street.

Over those 160 years Pembroke Cottage has had at least six identifiable owners of which the Bennett Family are, perhaps, the best remembered. Because of the large block of land on which the cottage stands it is a miracle that it survived the Villa Home boom of the 1970's and 1980's.

Some pioneer buildings justify preservation for reasons in addition to their age and the period in which they were built. Typical of these are John Downey's Cottage on the corner of Downey Street and Mimosa Street West Bexley. Built in 1855, by the Irish immigrant John Downey, its claim to fame is that it is the location of the first Catholic Church Services to be held in the St. George District.

Until a permanent church was built in Croydon Road in 1883, itinerant priests said Mass, baptised the children and married their parents, often in that order, at the home of one of the faithful. John Downey claimed to be the first whose home was used for this purpose.

That fact alone makes this pioneer building worthy of preservation.

RON RATHBONE

**Local Government Representative
Heritage Council of N.S.W.
1992-1999**

Events at Lydham Hall 1 / 7 / 2004 – 30 / 6 / 2005

18/07/04	Christina Stead Day
09/08/04	Bexley Public School (50 Children + Teachers)
04/09/04	Bexley Spring Fair (Sale of books from Lydham Hall)
17/10/04	Friends of Mays Hill Cemetary (14 People)
19/10/04	St. Declans School Penshurst. (54 Children + Teachers)
29/10/04	Kingsgrove Uniting Church (Sale of books from Lydham Hall)
30/10/04	Kingsgrove Uniting Church (Sale of books from Lydham Hall)
03/11/04	Alpha-Beta Group (Betsy Eardley group) (12 People)
17/04/05	Heritage Week Historical – Historic Walk of Banksia (Returned to Lydham Hall for Afternoon Tea)
23/04/05	Anisha Sully Name Day (Also booked ahead for Birthday Party on 30/07/05)
10/05/05	Aged Group from Nursing Home (Arranged by Mrs. Fisher) (27 People)
26/05/05	Order of Amaranth (Masonic Group)