

St. George Historical Society Inc. Bulletin

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE CITY COUNCIL

APRIL - JUNE 2006 EDITION



CAMEOS OF BEXLEY



R. W. RATHBONE



Book Launch

See inside for details

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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.

APRIL - JUNE EVENTS AGENDA

Apr 15 HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETING CANCELLED

Since the St. George Historical Society meeting occurs during Easter there will be no meeting. We wish all of you a peaceful happy Easter.



Apr 23 ST. GEORGES DAY CANCELLED

Because of the many other events being held at this time, namely school holidays and Easter, the society has sadly had to cancel this event.

Apr 30 BOOK LAUNCH & THE PARISH OF ST. GEORGE DAY

Local historian, Ron Rathbone's, latest book 'Cameos of Bexley' will be launched at Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Avenue, Bexley. The book is a collection of fascinating historical perspectives on a locality with which Mr. Rathbone has had a lifelong association. He was principal of Bexley Public School for many years as well as serving numerous terms as mayor of Rockdale. 'Cameos of Bexley' is comprehensively illustrated and includes many interesting facts and stories, such as the grisly murders at St Elmo, the home of the Palmer family in Harrow Road during the 1920s.

The book launch also coincides with the St George Historical Society's celebration of 171 years since the proclamation of the Parish of St George as well as a display of the Rupert Gough collection of historical photographs of the St. George area.

Time: 1- 4pm. Light refreshments will be served.

Please call (02) 9587 – 8307 if you have any enquiries.

May 21 ROCKDALE CITY CULTURAL FESTIVAL

This event will be held in Firth Street, Arncliffe. St. George Historical Society and Lydham Hall will have a bookstall at this event.



SKERICKS



On Feb 19th, 2006 we celebrated the 35th anniversary of the opening of Lydham Hall, as the St. George Historical Society Museum. It was a beautiful day and we had many visitors, who enjoyed afternoon tea and a tour around Lydham Hall.

A plaque was placed in the main entrance hallway. It is now known as “The Rathbone Hall” which reads as follows:

THE RATHBONE HALL

In recognition of the invaluable contribution given by

Mr. R. W. RATHBONE. O. A. M.

to Lydham Hall and St. George Historical Society.

February 19th, 2006

We must again thank our Vice President, Mr. Bernard Sarah, for his work in conducting the historical walks as on Sunday, February 19th, 2006 he toured with a group from The National Trust, on a history walk of Arncliffe. They returned to St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church, where afternoon tea was served to them by St. George Historic Society where some of our books were sold as well.

The walk was enjoyed immensely by everyone and the National Trust have now placed another booking for a walk in June. Many thanks Bernard.



The following article is one of many supplies to us, the editors, for use in Bulletin by the Esteemed Historian, Mr. R. W. Rathbone. O.A.M.

His latest book will be launched at Lydham Hall as previously mentioned on April 30th, 2006 at Lydham Hall.

We would like to thank Mr. Rathbone for all of his very interesting articles.

The Editors

PUTTING THE ROCK IN ROCKDALE

We have usually associated the name Rockdale with rocky outcrops, quarrying and sandstone houses and, indeed, when Mary Ann Geeves suggested this name for the railway station that was being erected in her backyard at the top of Bay Street in 1884, it could not have been a more appropriate suggestion

Tempe House, Lydham Hall, the Bay Street Uniting Church and many of Rockdale's other pioneer buildings are built of sandstone but have you ever stopped to think how many other buildings in Sydney are built of sandstone which came from quarries located in the City of Rockdale.

Thomas Holt's enormous mansion "The Warren" which was built by Rockdale stonemason Elias Godfrey was constructed of sandstone blocks from Joseph Walz's Rockdale Quarry as was the magnificent Hunter Baillie Memorial Presbyterian Church with its soaring tower in Johnston Street Annandale. Walz's Quarry is today's Gardiner Park.

What makes Rockdale unique in its use of sandstone for domestic building purposes is that, years after it had ceased to be used in other parts of Sydney, it was still being widely utilised in Rockdale. Thus you will find Victorian, Federation and even some Californian Bungalows constructed out of this material.

Atkinson, Denison, Duncan, Godfrey, Hannam and Segenhoe Streets Arncliffe, Cameron, Farr, Frederick and Gibbes Street Rockdale; Bowmer, Curtis and Judd Street Banksia and Abercorn, Broadford, Connemarra and Highgate Streets Bexley contain a number of examples of Victorian sandstone domestic architecture while Walker Street, Cameron Street Rockdale, Wollongong Road and Connemarra Street have some excellent examples of Federation sandstone houses.

Perhaps the most interesting collection, are the cottages, in East Street and The Glen Road, Bardwell Valley built by Arncliffe builders Smellie and Sim. Each one of them bears the date of construction on the front gable. Then there are the buildings which have external sandstone walls with brick internal ones. These buildings give Rockdale a character all its own and are possibly the result of Arncliffe having a large working quarry which was still operating until the 1950's.

While there is something rather romantic about living in a sandstone house and sandstone has long been an excellent means of insulation against extreme weather conditions these buildings are not without their disadvantages.

Sandstone is porous and unless it is rendered or a painted sandstone house needs a verandah on all four sides to protect it against dampness. Sandstone is also very soft and while this enables carved decoration to be undertaken with ease the carved features can weather very quickly making repair and replacement both expensive and difficult.

Many early subdivisions in Rockdale took no account of the topography of the area creating cliffs where no cliffs were previously located and large areas of exposed rock as the allotments on these estates were developed.

Because of the generally hilly nature of Rockdale, especially west of the railway line rocky outcrops and cuttings and the use of stone in public works such as retaining walls are major features of the suburb. Sandstone was also used extensively for foundations, fences and in many cases with brick houses, for decorative front verandahs.

As the Rockdale Heritage Study stated, Rockdale couldn't be more aptly named.

Ron Rathbone

Mates

I've traveled down some lonely roads
Both crooked tracks and straight,
An' I've learned life's noblest creed
Summed up in one word ... "Mate"

I'm thinking back across the years,
(a thing I do of late)
An' this word sticks between me ears
You've got to have a "Mate".

Someone who'll take you as you are
Regardless of your state
An' stand as firm as Ayres Rock
Because 'e is your mate.
Me mind goes back to '42
To slavery and 'ate
When Man's one chance to stay alive
Depended on 'is "Mate".

With bamboo for a bill-can
An' bamboo for a plate
A bamboo paradise for bugs,
Was bed for me and "Mate".

You'd slip and slither through the mud
And curse your rotten fate,
But then you'd 'ear a quiet word:
Don't drop your bundle "Mate"

And though it's all so long ago
This truth I 'ave to state:
A man don't know what lonely means
Til 'e 'as lost his "Mate".

If there's a life that follers this,
If there's a 'golden-gate',
The welcome I just want to 'ear
Is just "Good on y' Mate".

An' so to all that ask why
We keep these special dates,
Like "Anzac Day" ... I answer "why?"
We're thinking of our "Mates".

An' when I've left the driver's seat,
An' handed in me plates,
I'll tell of Peter at the door
I've come to join me "Mates"

Author: Duncan Butler, 2/12th Field Ambulance

Published in Patsy Adam-Smith's book: "Prisoners of War", 1992

Source: <http://www.celebratewa.com.au/Events/view.asp?DetailsID=124>

**ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
PRICE LIST FOR BOOKS**

No. 1 - The Early History - The Wolli Creek Valley	\$ 2.50
No. 2 - The Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway	\$ 2.50
No. 3 - Saywells Tramway 1887 - 1914 Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach	\$ 2.50
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	\$ 2.50
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	\$ 3.00
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.

**ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.
STATEMENT OF INCOME & EXPENDITURE
YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE, 2005**

INCOME \$

Membership Fees	287.00
Raffle Receipts	42.00
Bank Interest	2.15
Book Sales	45.00
Donations	48.00
Tours	220.00
Sub Total	<u>644.15</u>
Plus:	
Bal. in Bank 30/06/04	617.90
Total:	<u>\$1,262.05</u>

LESS EXPENDITURE \$

R.A.H.S. Subscription	88.60
R.A.H.S. Conference	69.00
Bulk Postage	228.00
Bexley Commerce Street Stall	20.00
Kingsgrove Street Stall	22.50
Guest Speaker	60.00
Department of Fair Trading	64.00
Expenses for gifts etc	54.52
Sub Total	<u>606.62</u>
Less Unpresented cheques	42.50
00149 \$22.50	
00150 \$20.00	
Plus:	
Bal. In Bank 30/06/05	<u>697.93</u>
Total:	<u>\$1,262.05</u>

SIGNED:

W L Fairclough

DATE:

01/03/06