



# OUR HISTORY

MAGAZINE of the ST GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

January - March 2017

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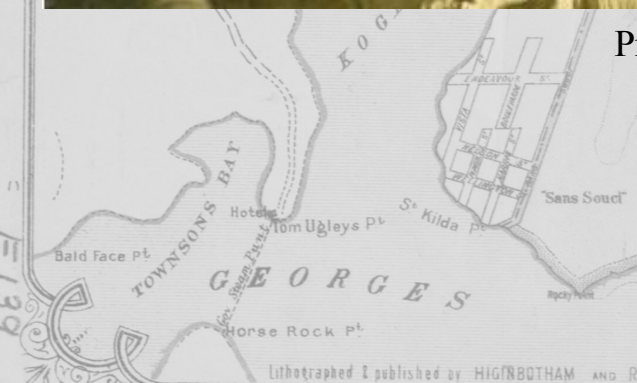
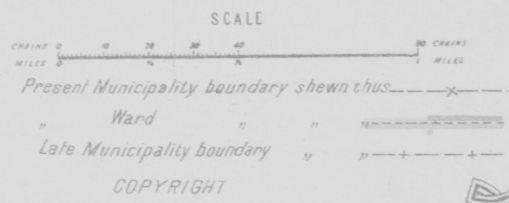
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**Front Cover Image** – The official opening ceremony of Carruthers Drive by the Governor of NSW, Vice Admiral Sir Harry Rawson, on 28 February 1909. The thoroughfare is now The Grand Parade. [1]

**Front Cover Background** – 1939 street map of Rockdale, NSW, showing administrative boundaries and physical features, scale [ca. 1:18,000]. [2]

**Back Cover Image** – Members of the Carlton-West Kogarah Voluntary Workers organisation at Clareville Pleasure Grounds, 1917. [1]

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## Welcome

As a new year begins, it is worthwhile to find a few peaceful moments to reflect on the previous 12 months, an especially enjoyable process if you have a love for history. 2016 was particularly eventful for the St George Region.

On 30<sup>th</sup> July, Rockdale Library reopened after an award-winning renovation, creating a light-filled space for learning. Just as the opening of Rockdale's first branch library in 1948 was an exciting event for eager readers, our new library is busy with students and readers of all ages, engaged with a mixture of digital and 'old fashioned' paper-based resources. From personal experience, the local studies centre is highly recommended as a resource for your family history, ANZAC Centenary or school project enquiries.

On 9<sup>th</sup> September, our council structure underwent its most significant change since the merger of Bexley and Rockdale Councils in 1948. Botany and Rockdale Councils have merged to form Bayside Council and Hurstville and Kogarah Councils merged to form Georges River Council. The profound benefits of the merger almost 70 years ago are a reassuring sign for the potential changes in the 21<sup>st</sup> century for all local residents.

In the previous edition, I noted two items. I can happily report updates on both.

On 10<sup>th</sup> September, the Ron Rathbone Local History Prize winners for 2016 were announced. In expression of my sincere gratitude for their contribution to the recording of our local history, I felt these deserved to be highlighted in a special edition of our magazine. The entrants have very obligingly agreed and I have selected excerpts from each entry, encouraging you to read the full texts.

In November, Primrose House was sold to the Presbyterian Church Property Trust. The building will be restored to serve as a private kindergarden

and primary school for Scots College. Importantly, the church has promised to retain the heritage features of the property. Built in 1891 as the Scarborough Hotel, Primrose House was most recently a NSW State Health Administration office. When a tender for sale process was announced, a local meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2016 at the site attracted over 300 people, including many of our members, concerned for the future of this historic site. This sale announcement suggests the preservation of the site will remain a priority for the foreseeable future.

In early December, it was lovely to see so many members at our Christmas luncheon at Lydham Hall. Thank you to Laurice and the Lydham Hall Committee for organising this delightful afternoon where the exhibits and photographs in the hall became talking points for some fascinating conversations.

As a new year begins, our meetings are now hosted in the comfortable meeting rooms of Rockdale Library, beginning with 2 compelling presentations. I hope you can attend each of our events, listed in the calendar on page 4.

If you're receiving the print edition of the magazine and you'd prefer the digital version via email, please let me know at [barry@stgeorgehistsoc.org.au](mailto:barry@stgeorgehistsoc.org.au)

On behalf of the society, I extend a warm welcome to our latest member, **Diane McCarthy of Monterey**.

As always, if you have any stories, objects or photographs which offer more insights into the items in this edition, please email me or let me know at our next event.

**Barry Johnson**  
*Editor*

## Calendar

Our meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month (except December and January) at 2pm at Level 3, Rockdale Library, 444-446 Princes Highway, Rockdale..

Visitors are very welcome to enjoy presentations by guest speakers, discuss local history with members during our afternoon tea. Please visit our website or Facebook page, check the Events pages of the St George Leader published on the Wednesday preceding the meeting or contact our Secretary, Laurice Bondfield on 9599-4274 to confirm the details.

Please update your calendars with our meetings for 2017:

- **Saturday 18th February 2017 2pm** Guest speaker: Dr Panayiotis Diamadis, presenting the book, *Selling the American Dream: the Greek Cafe and Milk Bar*. In an Australia we still remember was the Greek café or milk bar, open all hours, 7 days a week. They gave us more than milkshakes, lollies, ice cream and home style meals. With Modernist designs, American gadgetry and coloured light, cafés brought a glamorous hint of Hollywood into suburban Sydney.
- **18th March 2pm** Guest speaker: Anne Field, presenting her book, *The History of Moorefield Racecourse*. This social history of the racecourse from 1888 – 1951 recounts the stories of jockeys, apprentices, golfers, bookmakers, punters and local residents.
- **22nd April 2pm**, during the week of Easter Sunday.
- **20th May 2pm**
- **17th June 2pm**
- **15th July 2pm**
- **19th August 2pm**
- **16th September 2pm**
- **21st October 2pm**
- **18th November 2pm**

### Special events:

- **5th February** – Lydham Hall reopens.
- **5th February** – Tempe House Open Day at 8 Brodie Spark Dr, Wolli Creek.
- **18th April - 21st May** – National Trust History Festival <https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/ahf/nsw/>
- **7th May** – Tempe House Open Day.
- **6th August** – Tempe House Open Day.
- **2nd - 10th September** – History Week <http://historycouncilnsw.org.au/history-week/>
- **5th November** – Tempe House Open Day.

## 2016 Ron Rathbone Local History Prize

In 2016, there were 5 adult and 6 junior entrants to the Ron Rathbone Local History Prize. Entrants “were asked to submit a piece of research on any aspect of the Rockdale Local Government Area - its history, buildings, organisations, people, parks, natural features or events” [3]. In September, the winners were announced:

- Junior Winner (Primary School Category): Jessica Vrckovski
- Junior Winner (High School Category): Cindy Purvis
- Adult Winner: Leonie Bell
- Award for Outstanding Contributions: Karen Pentland

A short extract from each entry begins on page 6.

The adult entries:

- Against the odds: the History of the Rockdale Opera Company by Leonie Bell
- Primrose House, Dolls Point - A History by Dr Garry Darby
- Rockdale Remembers - A First World War Centenary Commemoration by Charles Davis
- Jone (Jovan) Belcheff and Mick Veloskey - Brilliant Lives by Liljana Mitreska
- Rockdale Police Station in the Press 1890s – 1960s by Karen Pentland

Charles' article refers to the website (<https://sites.google.com/site/ww1rockdaleenlistees/>) he has created to commemorate the WW1 enlistees with connections to the City of Rockdale. This site provides researchers with a centralised listing of digitised information.

The junior entries:

- The History of St David's Anglican Church by Odette Hedges
- Church of Life by Ada Kwok
- Ramsgate Beach by Silvia Kwok
- History of Sydney Airport by Adrian Leong
- The Life and Legacy of Pemulwuy by Cindy Purvis
- The History of Rockdale Women's Netball Courts at 310 West Botany Street by Jessica Vrckovski

I encourage you to read the full entries, available in the Rockdale Library Local Studies Centre or online at the Rockdale Library website:

[http://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au/library/Pages/Library\\_RonRathbonePrize.aspx](http://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au/library/Pages/Library_RonRathbonePrize.aspx)

To view the sources cited with numbered references in these extracts, please refer to the original entries.

On behalf of the society, I would like to congratulate each entrant for their research into our local history.

# Against the odds: the History of the Rockdale Opera Company

by Leonie Bell



## Introduction

I had always wanted to sing on the stage. I first sang in the chorus of Rockdale Municipal Opera Company in 1975 in a production of the *Gondoliers*, directed by Brian Phillips. Shift work caused a gap in my association with the company, but I returned in the 1980s to once again sing in the chorus. From 1988 to 1990 I studied opera at the Sydney Conservatorium of Music and subsequently moved to England, where I eventually gained a series of contracts with the chorus of the English National Opera.

Returning to Australia in 2000 I again performed at Rockdale, this time in lead roles, improving my stagecraft whilst auditioning for Opera Australia. Although I sang in the chorus of several Opera Australia productions, I never did break into the permanent singing career, but I retain a fondness for Rockdale Opera Company.

Unlike the UK, where small semi-professional and professional opera companies abound, Rockdale was for many years the only place in Sydney that a

young singer could take to the boards to learn the stagecraft of opera. There have always been amateur musical theatre companies in suburban Sydney, and the Gilbert and Sullivan Society promoted the wonderful works of G & S operetta, but Rockdale was pretty much the only place where aspiring opera singers could perform. Even today, with Pacific Opera providing an additional training ground, the field of amateur opera in Sydney is sparsely populated, and Rockdale remains a great place for gaining theatrical experience.

Many well-known classical singers and musicians performed at Rockdale early in their careers. Rockdale Opera has always been a springboard for young singers onto the wider operatic stage. Perhaps the best known of these is company Patron Daniel Sumegi, who after a handful of performances at Rockdale in the 1980s, went on to sing roles with major operatic houses worldwide, including Opera Australia at the Sydney Opera House, New York's Metropolitan Opera, the Paris Opera, Hamburg State Opera, Teatro Colon Buenos Aires and Tokyo's New National Theatre. He was

nominated for the 2014 Helpmann Award for his portrayal of Fasolt and Hagen in Wagner's Ring Cycle with Opera Australia. 1

Jonathon Welch, now well-known for the television series "Choir of Hard Knocks" sang in productions at Rockdale in the 1980's and 90's, whilst popular baritone Jose Carbo went on to sing the role of Figaro in Opera Australia's "Barber of Seville" after dazzling Rockdale audiences in the same role in 2000. He is now a much sought after performer, recently singing the role of Zurga in The Pearl Fishers for Opera Australia.

Other singers at Rockdale who became well known to Opera Australia audiences include: Geoffrey Chard, Alan Light, Robert Gard, Neil Easton, Rosalind Keene, Bill Diamond, John Wood, Doreen Morrow, Barry Ryan, Lesley Stender, Ronal Jackson, Neville Wilkie, Stephen Bennett, Roger Howell and John Main.

Dancers who were able to develop skills with the company included Beth den Bodenweiser, Raissa Kouznetzova and Margaret Chapple. Many musicians gained valuable orchestral experience, such as conductor Simone Young and Rockdale Orchestra First Violinist Harry Curby, who told Maestro Cedric Ashton that playing with Rockdale Opera Company was one of the most valuable experiences of his life. He went on to lead the Sydney String Quartet and Australian Opera and Ballet Orchestra. 2

This short history asks what it was that enabled Rockdale Opera to produce classical opera in the St George region when there were such formidable odds against its survival. It endeavours to bring to life the personalities who contributed to its success, reminisces on memorable performances, and examines its contribution to Sydney's musical life.

Now in its sixty-eighth year, Rockdale continues to bring affordable opera to the suburbs and provide opportunities for young singers who may one day rise to international stardom.

### **Extract from '1940s Company Formation', on pages 8 and 9:**

The inaugural production was to be Faust, starring tenor Allan Ferris in the eponymous role and accompanist Megan Evans' husband William Diamond as Mephistopheles. The event was a significant one in Sydney's musical life, attracting the interest of Sydney Symphony Chief Conductor

and Conservatorium of Music Director Eugene Goossens, who was in attendance on opening night. Initially the reception from the critics was less than enthusiastic, particularly in a review in the Sydney Morning Herald which observed,

"The task of presenting a "Faust" of even moderate musical value proved to be far beyond the present resources of this brave and willing organisation". 28

The production included 41 members of the Rockdale Municipal Orchestra, 9 ballet dancers from the Ballet and Theatre Club Group and a robust, but oddly unbalanced, chorus of 34 sopranos, 9 tenors and 11 basses. The large chorus size was primarily due to the assistance of Rockdale Musical Society. 29

Overall, it was seen by the council and the Orchestra Committee as a success. The lukewarm reception by the critics didn't deter audience attendance. The public applauded with gusto and the show made a modest profit.

The Orchestra Committee voted a motion of thanks to Allan Ferris for his hard work, which was completed entirely in a voluntary capacity. They recommended that the council pay him an honorarium of 15 pounds 15 shillings. With so many tasks needing attention, it had been far too much for Allan, Rupert and Cedric to complete alone. The opera became a family affair. Mrs Ferris and Mrs Orchard were also acknowledged for their contribution to the opera's success. 30

That year the orchestra also played for the ballet on the 21<sup>st</sup> July. Cedric Ashton was experiencing considerable difficulty in obtaining the ballet orchestral scores from the publisher. There was no possibility of changing the ballet. The tickets had been printed and programs arranged, subscribers contacted and the Polish Australian Ballet already in rehearsal, but there was no sheet music available. Ultimately he was forced to orchestrate a significant proportion of the music himself. 31

Although the committee felt it was highly desirable to produce a second opera in 1948, the Town Hall wasn't available due to pre-existing bookings, prompting a decision to defer the next opera to the following year. The 1949 subscription season commenced with Carmen, starring Allan Ferris in a dual role as Producer and leading man Don Jose. A young Megan Evans was the rehearsal accompanist. 32



According to the critics, standards had improved, despite a few technical glitches. Both Norma Lever's Carmen and Neil Easton's Dancairo were praised, although Allan Ferris' Don Jose was merely "serviceable". Unfortunately, simple things can often leave a lasting impression with the audience, overshadowing the memory of the performance as a whole. After singing the famous Flower Song, Allan dropped the flower given to him by Carmen and completely ignored it. Perhaps he was preoccupied with his complex responsibilities as romantic lead and producer. His direction was not particularly inspired. He was criticised for arranging the chorus in a semi-circle most of the time.

Meanwhile, the Rockdale Municipal Orchestra ventured further into the field of ballet in 1949, playing for the Polish-Australian Ballet Company (also known as the Kousnetzova Ballet) at Rockdale Town Hall. The ambitious program

included Les Sylphides, Les Preludes, Spectre de la Rose and Danube au Printemps. While commending Rockdale Council for its support for the arts, the review was scathing, suggesting that the council should insist on higher artistic standards.

"The music in last night's ballets ... was provided by an orchestra whose members, for the most part, seemed not to have passed the most elementary technical hurdles. It was little wonder then that their music was thick, turgid, and shapeless" 34

The year was completed with an orchestral concert in September and an orchestral choral concert in November, with all four shows offered for the princely sum of £1/1/- per annum. Despite some critical reviews, the venture had proved a success with both council and audiences.





# Primrose House, Dolls Point - A History

by Dr. Garry Darby

## Foreword

Cook, Banks, Phillip and Bass & Flinders all drifted by this beach. Prior to all of them it was occupied for many thousands of years by the Gweagal people. When tram lines were laid at Sandringham in 1887 Aboriginal shell middens were disturbed.

Also in 1887 original land grants to colonial settlers were carved up into smaller lots.

James Eve bought six of them and built a hotel on the site.

It has rightly been described as:

"A place full of sea breeze and sunshine".

Subsequently Eve's hotel had a range of names until, in 1936, it became "Primrose House".

This book tells the story of the building in all of its formations.

More importantly, it tells the story of the people who owned, leased, occupied or otherwise had reason to be in or around the building.

Oh, and it tells the story of people who went bankrupt because of the house and land.

There were moments of grandeur here too. Mr. Wimble was a dedicated and colourful host. 'Come and watch the sailing races from my observation deck'.

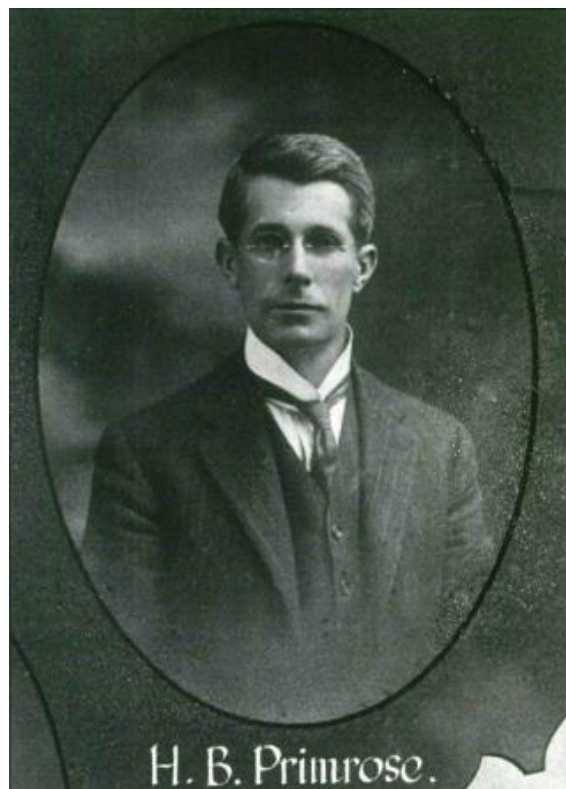
Sly grog was certainly sold here. That was when it was a 'gentleman's drinking club'.

And then there was a time when it was a place for gentlemen residents - one alone - and one with an active family.

Some clever and effective people were associated with the house; hoteliers, teachers, nurses and women of vision and compassion like Matron Boniface just after World War One.

## Extract from 'Chapter Nine: A College for young Gentlemen' on pages 68 – 73:

Notions of excellence and quality were connected with 'Corrimal Hall' in early 1930 when "St Laurence College" the school associated with



Some of life's tragedies were played out in this house. Soldiers died and suffered there, and later convalescents from the main hospital were central to the main activities for a long period of time.

In the grounds were band concerts, fetes, Christmas carols and tennis matches. There was a motor launch, a billiard table and, by the 1960s, television.

Cook Park almost surrounded the house and many, many picnics were held within its shadows.

Administration offices are not very glamorous places. They leave little for the historian to celebrate. Some yearn for the 'old days' which, I suppose, is the main topic of this book.

Christ Church St Laurence, George St. Sydney chose to relocate the college for 'day boys and boarders' there. This had been in operation since 1924 at the Sydney address.

Administrators believed that they:

had acquired a large and eminently

suitable property on the south-western shores of Botany Bay, near the mouth of the George's River, ideally suited from a health point of view and specially adapted to meet the needs of delicate boys.(112)

The Prospectus went on to describe the surrounding area saying;

The school is situated at the end of Russell Avenue, Dolls Point, facing

the sea, and commanding a glorious view of the George's River and the whole of Botany Bay. Adjoining the School are many acres of public park, while thousands of pine and ornamental trees add to the beauty of the site. Constant sea breezes and an almost total absence of dust make the situation second to none from a health point of view. (113)

# *ST. LAURENCE COLLEGE*

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In Connection with Christ Church, St. Laurence, Sydney.

**A CHURCH OF ENGLAND SCHOOL FOR DAY BOYS AND BOARDERS.**

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Rev. K. D. ROACH, B.A., at the College, or Christ Church Clergy House,  
Pitt-street, Sydney. Telephone, LW 4402.**





# Rockdale Remembers - A First World War Centenary Commemoration

by Charles Henry Davis

At the bequest of the Western Front Association (Australia Branch) Chairman, Lt Col Paul Simadas, a 'selection from a First World War Commemorative website dedicated to those enlistees from the City of Rockdale, NSW' was presented in November 2015. Personnel chosen were on a theme of association with (what in their day was) the Municipality of Rockdale, by way of current-day descendants residing in a suburb of (what has been known since 1995) the City of Rockdale - had these people not made contact, their relative would have remained unknown to this locality.

## Extract from pages 10 – 12:

The presentation drew focus to a First World War commemoration website dedicated to the City of Rockdale from which the service personnel were extracted.

This site is searchable in Google as 'WW1 Rockdale Enlistees' and attendees were requested to look towards the bottom right-hand of the display and a column titled 'Rockdale Connection'

Attention then shifted to an entry within those tagged 'M to R' and a note 'identified as local by Father Brendan Quirk (St Joseph's Rockdale)'.

This would be Monsignor John Joseph Nevin who should not be confused with a serviceman of identical name in the National Archives Australia who was born in Birmingham England, and who died 1951)

## John Joseph Nevin

Rockdale's John Joseph Nevin, (Parish Priest post-WW2), as the Jan 1920 Catholic Press article (image A) states, was 'A native of Galway Ireland, [and had] arrived in Sydney to take up duties at St Patrick's Manly. For three years he was in France

as chaplain to an English regiment, and in the course of duties was badly wounded. For the last year he was at Lourdes in charge of the many thousands of soldiers who made pilgrimages to that sacred spot.'

In October that same year a Sydney Morning Herald article has Rev Dr J J Nevin 'awarded the Croix de Guerre avec Palme by the French Government. Dr Nevin, who is 33, volunteered from Ireland for war service and was with the Yorkshire division as chaplain in France from 1916



to 1919, suffering a severe wound at Neuve Chapelle May 2 1917, necessitating the amputation of his right leg.'

The current-day parish priest, Father Brendan Quirk, also lent the website a selection of

Monsignor Nevin's First World War Mass kit items.



The chalice is stamped with the date 1685 which may reference the Edict of Fontainebleau, signed by Louis XIV, banning Protestant worship in

France (as per Virtual Museum of Protestantism website).



# Jone (Jovan) Belcheff and Mick Veloskey - Brilliant Lives

by Liljana Mitreska

## Introduction

I had arrived in Sydney in 1959 aboard the old Italian rust bucket ship Toscana, with my mother and two older siblings. I attended all manner of social events in the life of the Macedonian community and as I grew up I always saw the presence of two outstanding individuals, Jone Belcheff and Mick Veloskey. They both left their mark on me and the rest of community for their tireless work in bravely providing a better life for the Macedonian immigrants in their new home. I knew that they were the individuals that I had to write about and give due belated credit for all their effort.

## Extracts from 'Jone Belcheff' on pages 10, 11:

Jone had the foresight to see that activities had to be provided to keep Macedonian youth occupied. To that end, once the church hall was built, it became the home for the Ilinden Dance group for rehearsals and concerts, as well as providing a large cloak room for the storage of folk costumes. During this period, Jone not only served as president of the church but the dance group Ilinden. This all demonstrated his strong capacity for voluntary work for the Macedonian community.

Another avenue of keeping Macedonian children occupied in the St George area was to support for and lobby for the establishment of Macedonian ethnic schools, firstly at Rockdale public school, then Arncliffe, Athelstane and Bexley primary schools. Jone rightly believed that learning the mother Macedonian language would foster national pride and provide happy, useful adults. He had the vision to support these schools at a time when there was immense public pressure and sentiment for the children of immigrants to assimilate quickly. Jone's foresight ensures that the Macedonian ethnic school

at Rockdale public school continues today.

Jone's tireless community service was recognised and rewarded when he was named Rockdale Citizen of the year in 1988. This was the culmination of thirty years' devoted service to the local Macedonian community.

## Extracts from 'Mick Veloskey' on pages 18, 22:

Mick had the foresight and courage to acknowledge that the local Macedonian community needed a church to bring the people together as a community, as they were powerless and without a voice, compared to other older and wealthier ethnic communities in Sydney such as the Greek or Italian communities.

In 1967 Mick liaised with the Anglican bishop of Sydney to approve the deconsecration of the Anglican Church at Rosebery and later consecrated as a Macedonian orthodox church. A charitable company was established, fortuitously avoiding the later problems experienced by St Petka Church, Rockdale and its trust deed for the mother church in Skopje.

They were able to bring out from Macedonia the first Parish Priest, Father Vlado, from Ohrid. Thereafter, the community enjoyed regular services in the Macedonian language performed by a variety of successive priests.

Mick's tireless work for the Macedonian community was publicly acknowledged in 2013 when a commemorative dinner was arranged in his honour by the United Diaspora Association. Their special guest, Labor politician and Foreign Affairs Minister Bob Carr acknowledged Mick's long service on behalf of the Macedonian community and awarded him lifetime membership of the association for his past work.



# The Black & White of the Thin Blue Line: Rockdale Police Station in the Press 1890s - 1960s

by Karen Pentland



## Introduction

The policemen and women of New South Wales are often in the media with the coverage of the work they do. As the daughter of a late, long serving Police Sergeant and the cousin of a current acting Police Inspector, I have grown up immersed in the culture of the thin, blue line. I have friends who have joined up, studied, experienced and left the force. I have even taught students who have first joined somewhat surreptitiously, due to their family connections and home location. I have sat at dinner tables, regaled by tales and exploits, long into the night. I have attended the funerals of those who have fallen in the line of duty and the annual memorials held in different states and even countries half a world away.

The Force had its origins in the early days of convict settlement, being an integral part of our society and has developed through many stages to become the modern police organisation we see today. Policing today uses the press, the radio, the television, the general Internet and even Facebook to connect with the people they serve. The New

South Wales Police Force is divided into eighty Local Area Commands (LAC's) across the State of NSW, which covers an area of 801,600 square kilometres. From its early beginnings in 1789 with the establishment of a night watch corps, consisting of a dozen of the best behaved convicts, there has been a constabulary presence in this State. This was expanded in 1810 by Governor Macquarie, with a system of districts and ranks. However, the disparate sections of the Force often worked in isolation until in 1862 the Mounted Police, Foot Police and Water Police united into one group, numbering eight hundred and thirty four in the ranks. A further change in 1926 created the Commissioner of Police role, at time of writing held by Commissioner Andrew Phillip Scipione APM. In 1990, the Police Forces were amalgamated into one organisation now named the New South Wales Police Force. It is the third largest police organisation in the English speaking world, with 16,000 employees and 13,000 sworn police officers. (1)

However, this is the story of the policemen of the

now defunct Rockdale Police Station (pictured above), as reported in the press of the time, over the first seventy years of its existence. Here are some of the crimes they dealt with, the big and the small and the stories of the men and their families, walking the thin blue line of police work.

“Culpam poena premit comes” - The Latin motto, which when translated is 'Punishment follows close on guilt'. A free translation would be 'Punishment is a companion pressing closely on crime', or succinctly, 'Punishment swiftly follows crime'.



#### **Extract from 'The Beginnings' on pages 7 – 9:**

On Boxing Day 1894 there had also been an outbreak of hooliganism at the Moorefield Hotel which led to the Alderman and Mayor of Rockdale to write a letter to the Minister of Justice, requesting him to facilitate the erection of a Police lockup in Rockdale. There had not been a policeman between Sans Souci and Cook's River on Boxing Day. Surplus labour was available to build the lockup and Alderman H. Cook had sold a piece of his land to provide the site. Sergeant McColl received a letter back stating that lockups would be erected at Rockdale, Kogarah, and Marrickville as soon as possible. The Boxing Day debacle had led to Alderman G Duigan reporting the matter to the Inspector-General of Police. He received from Mr. Fosberry, the following reply:

“ Sir,-In reply to your letter dated the 29th ultimo, I beg to inform you that the police constables at Rockdale will not in future be sent away from the township when it can be avoided.”(4)

By November 1895 there was kerbing and guttering being carried out at the rear of Rockdale

police station. So, it appears it was the risk to hoteliers rather the deaths of small babies that drove the push for permanent police presence in Rockdale. The last few years of the century brought much work for the constabulary.

The waterways of Botany Bay and the Georges River often proved treacherous to the locals, sometimes even deadly, as in the case of Charles Selmon in early April 1898. (5) He had been employed as a watchman at the Weenie Bay oyster beds, due to the oysters being removed by picnic parties. He had been to check the oyster beds on the Saturday afternoon, was sighted by another on the waterway near Towra Point and then disappeared, leaving his boat floating upside down ... and empty. His father and brothers, along with Senior Constables Joyce and Brown, searched all day without luck for his body.

These constables had a better result in the pursuit of one George Peisley in the August of 1898. (6) Peisley had been involved in a gun battle with Constable McLean at Cabramatta, whilst stealing poultry, resulting in the wounding of the officer; he was seen a few days later one hundred and fifty yards on the Sydney side of the Como Bridge. He was on the run with his common law wife and after

some shots were exchanged, Peisley made good his escape. Forty members of the police force became involved in the search, among those assisting were Detectives Goulder, Brown, and Donovan, and Constable Lipscombe, who went to Brighton Racecourse and hid in the scrub. They chased Peisley to Arncliffe Hill and fired shots, then crossed the railway line near the station. They cleared the swamps, which proved a stumbling-block to Constable Lipscombe and Detective Brown, who ended up over waist deep in the marsh. Detective Donovan set off in chase on a horse and caught Peisley, who was then transported to Sydney by train. Detective Goulder recovered a pistol which was said to be used by Peisley. Meanwhile, at Newton Police Court, a woman named Ellen Baker, alias Peisley, aged thirty seven, was charged by Senior Constables Joyce and Brown with having no lawful means of support. Surprisingly when Paisley fronted court he was acquitted of the wilful shooting of Constable McLean; it was all an accident.

Finally, in May 1899, Earl Beauchamp, the new Governor of Australia arrived in Australia and was greeted upon his arrival at the Man'o War steps by the Premier and Sir Frederick Darley the Lieutenant Governor, and welcomed to New South Wales. Circular Quay was awash with people the Mayor of Sydney presented an address of welcome, to which his Excellency appropriately responded. As the masses returned home after the gala event, a young woman, named May Jones aged eighteen, fell off a crowded tram going from the city to Marrickville. (7) She was conveyed to Prince Alfred Hospital by Constables McTaggart and Mc Donnell, suffering from concussion. Constable McTaggart was a Rockdale police officer.

#### **Extract from 'Detective Stuart Robson 1911' on pages 112 – 114:**

Stuart Robson was born in 1880 in Tamworth, to father, William and mother, Mary Robson. He married Ida Mary Catherine Field in 1905 in Sydney, New South Wales. They had four children during their marriage, Edna, Edgar, Stuart and Bessie. Robson had a prolific police career, starting in 1901, that was splashed over the newspapers of the day.(268)

Robson's first big case in court was a £3,300 robbery in July 1914 when Ernest Alexander Ryan was charged with having robbed Frederick Charles Miller of £3,300 at Eveleigh Railway yards, whilst

using a revolver. (269) He was escorted back from Melbourne to Sydney by Detectives Robson, Souter, and Jones. Detective Robson also took back a lock of Ryan's hair to Sydney, where, if necessary, it would be analytically examined, as it was stated that Ryan had dyed his hair in order to evade arrest. Samuel Freeman, also involved in the heist, was arrested in Tasmania. When Ryan and Freeman fronted court, they asked if they could be sent to the Front; they were both sentenced to ten years penal servitude apiece instead. They were cheeky lads, with a long list of priors for robbery and housebreaking: Ryan asked that his revolver be presented to Detective Robson as a memento and Freeman said they could give his to the King. The jury stated in summing up that gross negligence was shown in the railway department's methods of transferring so large a sum of money as that stolen from one place to another.

By the 1 January 1919, Detective Robson from the CID was back to uniform upon his own request and was stationed in Clarence Street, Sydney on patrol duty. (270) There in 1920 he was involved in a case that was so spectacular that it is in the Police and Justice Museum at Circular Quay today. The shocking discovery by Harry Birkett about his mother's demise and the person who had killed her filled the newspapers for weeks at a time. The extraordinary chain of events that Detective Robson was involved in culminated in the arrest of Eugenia Falleni, aka Harry Crawford, the cross-gender murderer.

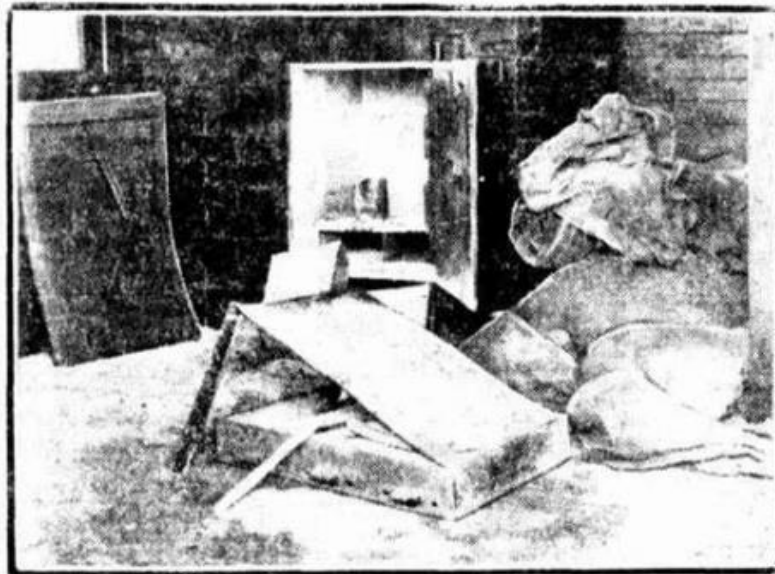




Over some days, Harry Birkett became utterly convinced that his mother had been murdered by Harry Crawford and that the body that had been found near the Cumberland Paper Mills in 1917 was hers. He became determined to uncover his mother's fate, no matter what it might have been, and, if she had been murdered by his stepfather, to bring him to justice, whether he was a man or a woman. When Harry Birkett reported his mother Annie Crawford as a missing person, he was interviewed by Detective Sergeant Stewart Robson, who assumed the role of chief investigator. (271) Detective Sergeant Robson located the police documentation about the 1917 investigation of the

body that had remained unidentified ; the file and exhibits had been retained at the Chatswood police station. He then showed Harry the jewellery, shoes, enamel cup, picnic basket, and the small piece of gabardine material that had been recovered from the park, which were identified as being his mother's belongings. More than two-and-a-half years after Annie's death, there was sufficient circumstantial evidence to conclude that the body was hers. Robson also used forensic evidence to pull the case together. It was when Robson arrested Crawford, that Crawford's true identity was admitted ... that of his original identity as Eugenia Falleni.

#### WORK OF **SAFE** BLOWERS



What the **Fresh Food and Ice Company's** office at Marrickville looked like this morning.

# The History of St David's Anglican Church

by Odette Hedges

Its history all started long before I was born or even my Mum and Dad were born. 183 years ago back in 1833, a small block of land in Hirst Street, Arncliffe was given to a convict named Rueben Hannam.

Reuben worked hard after he served his time and was given the land as a reward by the Governor for helping to develop sandstock bricks, which were very important in early colonial buildings.

Reuben's son, named David inherited the land and he later gave it to the Church of England.

Six months into construction a huge storm destroyed the partly built church. It was four years before building could start again. A second foundation stone was laid on August 1914 and finally on January 25th, 1915 the church opened for its first service "on a very hot night".



# Church of Life

by Ada Kwok

## Prelude

Often religious people call it the 'St. Gabriel the Archangel'. This holy place was built to pray for luxuries such as wealth, health and personal needs. St. Gabriel is a catholic church that is in Bexley just near Rockdale. In the picture below you would see where the church is located at. But you may wonder why I am telling you all this? Is it just because I feel like it and there is absolutely nothing else for me to do or is it because I want to use this

opportunity to be in the spotlight just because I have written an essay. In fact it is none of the above as a matter of fact the reason I wrote this book is because I feel that history is part of my life. Also I am a religious human and therefore being able to write this book is noble and gives me extreme pleasure to tell you about this majestic church. If you read on you will find out more history about this building, you will either find this fascinating or some very intriguing.





# Ramsgate Beach

by Silvia Kwok

The area of the beach is between Cooks River and Georges River, at first to be known as the Seven Mile Beach. In 1874 the name was then changed to Lady Robinson's Beach to honour the wife of Governor Sir Hercules Robinson. This beach is

actually a chain of a park and a beach hence the name Cook Park, Ramsgate Beach. The Cook Park was named after Samuel Cook who sponsors the area as a public place. The Ramsgate beach part was named after the coastal resort in England.



# History of Sydney Airport

by Adrian Leong



## The Founding of the Airport Site

Starting in the year of 1911 was when its history started. The airport site at the time was a bullock paddock. The land appealed to a man named Nigel Love as the sheep and cattle grazed on the buffalo grass so evenly, it was little effort to make it serviceable for landing aircraft.

Nigel Love wanted to establish a factory and an aerodrome close to the city. The Cooks River once flown through this land and it was diverted to prevent degradation of the banks. Also during that time, it hosted Sydney's third water supply and is now known as the Sydney Airport Wetlands. In the 1940s, a passenger terminal was opened and the

Cooks River was diverted to allow for the construction of two new runways.

The first flight from Mascot was on November 1919 when Love carried freelance movie photographer Billy Marshall up in an Avro. The official opening flight took place on 9 January 1920 performed by Love.

In 1921, the Commonwealth Government bought 65 hectares of land to create a public airfield. Love's three-year lease on his 80 hectares expired and the land was acquired by the Commonwealth Government. The first regular flights then began in 1924.



# The Life and Legacy of Pemulwuy

by Cindy Purvis

This report will explore the contentious history surrounding Pemulwuy, a Bidjigal warrior that has been hailed as an Aboriginal hero for being indicative of the Frontier expansionist war. Pemulwuy's life and legacy has been dictated by his ongoing role as a warrior in the conflict between Indigenous and settler populations. Thus, we can see the changing interactions between aboriginals and colonists that is epitomised in the fight that Pemulwuy's confrontation establishes. Then, we see in this report the extent to which Pemulwuy and his legacy has influenced the relationship of aboriginal and indigenous struggle for recognition of their respective histories and culture.

## Early Life and Background

Despite his impediment, Pemulwuy became superior in several aspects of his daily life, eventually becoming a carradhy, commonly known as a "clever man" within Indigenous Australian culture. This is noted by Colebe, an Indigenous mediator between Governor Phillip and the local tribes, who observed Pemulwuy's left foot, which

had been bruised and dislocated by a club, which indicated his status within the tribe. Pemulwuy can thus seen to have been an important member within his tribe who could dispense justice at will.

Because of his physical deformities, it was also believed that he was a kurdaitcha, meaning that his position empowered him to dispense justice to whomever threatened the welfare of the tribe in the form of ritual execution. He also hunted meat and provided it to the newly established white colony in exchange for goods. Upon reaching adulthood, he earned the name of Bembul Wuyan, meaning "the Earth and the Crow". Another commonly used name was Butu Wargun, meaning "Crow". This later came into full effect when it was believed that he had the spiritual ability to transform into a crow in a particular incident

later in his life where he was locked up and was able to escape.

Thus it can be seen that Pemulwuy's background, whilst being insubstantial in some areas, did prove his enduring facets that helped him shape the changing landscape between Indigenous and settler communities.





# The History of Rockdale Women's Netball Courts at 310 West Botany Street

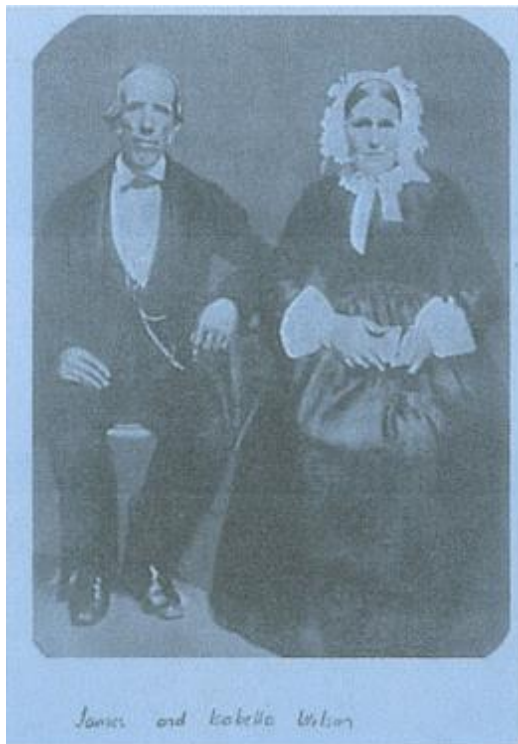
by Jessica Vrckovski

## Introduction

Every Saturday I come to the Rockdale Women's Netball Courts at 310 West Botany Street Rockdale to play in the district netball competition. Because I live so close to the netball courts, I tend to walk there. I pass many houses along the way with one particular house I notice being very peculiar but unique. In fact, it is not a house but a dilapidated cottage from a different time. I always tend to avoid it as it looks very creepy and probably haunted. Despite its eerie facade, I have often wondered about what was previously here in place of the

netball courts and the history behind the land and the creepy looking cottage that still stands there today.

What I didn't know was that the old cottage I walk past every Saturday and the entire netball complex was all part of what was known as Wilson's Farm back in the late 1800's. The old cottage standing there today is officially known as Wilson's Cottage (Farmhouse). It is one of the last surviving examples of modest pioneer homes built by early settlers in our district.



*The Cottage of James Wilson*

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To view the sources cited within the articles on pages 6 – 24, please refer to the original entries, available at:

[http://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au/library/Pages/Library\\_RonRathbonePrize.aspx](http://www.rockdale.nsw.gov.au/library/Pages/Library_RonRathbonePrize.aspx)

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