



# ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

SPONSORED BY ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL

53 Bruce Street,  
Bexley.  
14th April, 1967.

Dear Friend and Member,

The regular monthly meeting of the above Society will be held as follows:-

Date: Friday Evening next, 21st April, 1967, at 8 p. m.

Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Rockdale.

Guest Speaker: Mr. H. Marshall - pioneer Australian Aviator will show a number of unique pictures on the early days of aviation in Australia.

Business: General.

New and intending members most welcome.

Would lady members please bring a plate.

Gifford Eardley.  
President.

R. W. Rathbone.  
Hon. Secretary.  
58.4813.

## PRESIDENT ON DECK.

All members expressed spontaneous pleasure at having our President, Mr. Gifford Eardley, back with us again after his recent severe heart attack. He chaired the March meeting after an absence of nearly three months.

DATES TO REMEMBER.

197th Anniversary of the Landing at Kurnell Saturday,  
29th April, 1967, 2 p.m. at Kurnell Naval Guard & Band.

30th Anniversary of the closing of the Sans Souci Tramway.  
Sunday afternoon, 2nd July, 1967.  
1.30 p.m. onwards. Parramatta Park.  
It is possible that a steam tram car will be ready for operation.

SANS SOUCI TRAMWAY BOOKLET HUGE SUCCESS.

Only 80 of the 500 Books that became available last month on  
the now defunct Kogarah Sans Souci Tramway remain unsold.

This is not surprising when one reads this carefully compiled  
and beautifully illustrated volume.

Our first publication - "The Early History of the Wolli Creek  
Valley" is now a collector's item so if you would like a copy of our latest  
booklet, send your 65 cents NOW to -

53 Bruce Street, Bexley.

Next week may be too late !

THE NATIVE EDIBLE FRUITS OF THE ST. GEORGE DISTRICT.C.W. NAPPER.

If you should ask the average person about our native fruits he would be non-plussed and immediately think of quinces, pears, apples and such like fruits to be seen in the green grocer's shop, not knowing that these products originally came from over-sea countries, mostly for Asia and Europe. The native or Australian fruits, with the exception of the famous nut-trees of Queensland, have little if any commercial or even food value, although the small figs from the Port Jackson and Moreton Bay fig trees were used for jam making by the early settlers.

The principal fruit bearing tree of the St. George District would be, without doubt, the Brush Cherry (*Eugenia Austalis*), one of the beautiful lillypilly family. These trees flourished in profusion along the banks of the Bardwell Creek, which, unfortunately is now a scene of devastation in the interests of a golf course scheme. The fruit hung in pendulant clusters of about a dozen or so, and were of reddish-purple colour, resembling, as the name implies, small cherries in size, and tiny gooseberries in shape. When fully ripe they have a sharp acid taste, and were in great demand by small boys and cheeky birds of the currawong family.

The Wollie Creek gullies, and also along the verges of Pat Moore's Swamp, were the habitat of the water loving Common Lillypilly, which ranged from 10 to 25-ft. in height, and its acid tasing fruit was ready for eating about mid-June. At least one tree has survived in Scarborough Park, and there are several growing as of old in Girrahween Park, adjacent to Bardwell Park Railway Station. All of the various types of Lillypilly trees make good garden subjects and are well worthy of cultivation as their dark green, glossy foliage, lightened by profuse clusters of purple or near white berries, are most attractive.

The narrow strip of dense forest, that once lay between Lady Robinson's Beach and Pat Moore's Swamp, was an area noted for its huge gum trees, the charred hollow of one specially huge specimen, according to an old photograph, was in use as a dwelling place for an aboriginal family. Some of the trees measured 25-ft. in circumference and were over 100 feet in height. Beneath these forest trees the undergrowth was a mass of flowering shrubs, the glory of our bush. Amongst this verdure were the Five-corner bushes which, in old specimens, attained a height of about four feet. These plants produced a prolific crop of small pea-sized jelly like, and greenish coloured fruit. In the early spring the plants came into flower, the blooms being of tubular shape, often up to two inches in length, and of a creamy green colour. The small fruit were separately formed at the base of the flower and were encased in a five petal bract which, on ripening, turned brown, hence the name Five-corners.

Gathering Five-corners was a great occupation for the local lads and many an honest shilling was thus gained when quantities were sold to suburban fruiterers or in the Sydney markets. Although quite common in the Brighton-le-Sands - Ramsgate area, it is questionable if a single bush is to be found today in any part of the St. George District, thanks to the onslaught of civilisation.

Then there was a somewhat lesser prickly growth, particularly in the Ramsgate area, which spread along the ground and was known to the boys as Ten-corners. The flowers of this plant were small and cigar-shaped, and of bright red with yellow-tipped edges, with an average length of about one inch, and when in its full bloom the bush was most attractive. The small elongated fruit was similar in taste to that of the Five-corners but a little sweeter. These bushes were somewhat rare and greatly prized when discovered, but they have now joined the "Great majority" and are no longer to be found.

Another native fruit of the same area was the Geebung, which grew on a plant about four or five feet in height, the branches of which were in great demand for decorating, of all places, the window displays of meat in the local butchers' shops. The fruit was also green in colour and about the size and shape of a small broad bean, which, when fully ripe turned yellow. However, as one had to acquire a taste for these they were not popular amongst the juvenile collectors of bushland tit-bits.

The Blueberry Ash was, and still is, to be seen in Girrawheen Park, and its fruit, when ripe, is a beautiful bright blue. This particular fruit, apart from its attractive colour, is practically all seed stone and can hardly be classed as edible, although the berry-eating currawongs and the imported crested bul-buls have other ideas on this matter.

It should be mentioned that the grass-land enclosure of Arncliffe Park is the home of a multitude of tiny spindly plants known to children as "Puddens". These plants produce in early Spring, a single little bright pink bell-shaped flower, about one eighth of an inch in diameter. This in turn sets a green seed, about one quarter of an inch in length, which, by a wise provision of mother nature, is extended on a stalk, pointing downwards, from the plant to shed its seed and start life anew. The seed pods and their tiny contents have a sweetish taste and young boys in particular crawled around on hands and knees to forage for and eat these seeds.irate mothers discountenanced this fare on the basis that you never knew where the dogs had been

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REGENT STREET, KOGARAH, NEW SOUTH WALES.Violet Platt and Gifford Eardley.

It is of interest to check back on Regent Street, Kogarah, as it presented itself at the beginning of the present century. This now busy thoroughfare was then a lazy dusty street with a central sandstone surface which was hard and rough on the hooves of horses, and the feet of men, whilst cyclists kept rigidly to the verges where a sand path gave much easier riding. With the exception perhaps of a new-fangled motor-car, a remarkable and rowdy contraption with a chain drive, owned by the local Church of England Clergyman, the Reverend H.R.A. Wilson, motor traffic was practically non-existent. The kindly clergyman known disrespectfully to the children, through not wearing a hat, as "Atless 'Arry", could be seen at times chugging and blasting his slow way along Regent Street with his car full of excited kids and another less lucky cohort keeping up with his progress alongside, hanging on behind immersed in a cloud of road dust and engine fumes, and others of a more cautious nature trotting along the footpaths. All of which made "Atless 'Arry" glow with pride and pleasure.

For the purpose of our narrative, it is best to commence our verbal journey at the eastern intersection of Regent Street, with the then Rocky Point Road, which is now known as Princes Highway. Rather than risk being run over by fast moving sulkeys, slow moving Chinese vegetable carts, rabbit and clothes-prop purveyors, and others of like ilk, we will keep, at first, to the northern alignment of Regent Street to its western intersection with Railway Parade, then return to our starting point and treat the southern alignment in like manner.

Commencing at Rocky Point Road we found, on the northern side, an extensive unfenced grass paddock with frontages to both the latter road and Regent Street, whilst the rear boundary abutted on a laneway which divided this then undeveloped property from the former estate of Conrad Francks, the houses of which faced towards Stanley and Victoria Streets. The first house with its frontage to Regent Street was a two-storeyed residence, No. 58, which at the time under review belonged to Mr. Starling, and obviously built to a design that was common in the late nineties. It is still maintained in excellent order. At this point Regent Street, in dog's hind leg fashion, turns sharply to the south-west and is joined by the aforementioned laneway which had also turned in a similar direction, and followed along the western side of Mr. Starling's house property. Across this laneway was the large irregular shaped allotment with its old brick cottages, No. 48, facing eastwards instead of southwards towards Regent Street. At the time of our journey the place was occupied by Mr. Tate, who was Comptroller of Stores for the Postal Department. In passing it should be mentioned that two similar examples of this "side-on" cottage design are to be seen on the southern side of Derby Street, Kogarah, possibly originating from the same builder. The next house, of semi-detached design, Nos. 46 and 44, is also of a pattern which found great favour in the eighteen nineties and this particular example is most attractive. No. 46 was in the possession of Mr. Dupont, who was particularly proud of the huge Port Jackson fig tree which spread its dark-green foliage over the back fence, to the delight of the local bird population, which included many minions of the well-known sparrow tribe. A Mr. Price, who had a charming daughter named Hetty, occupied No. 44, the house next door. Then came a single fronted cottage, No. 42, and a vacant block on which, at a much later

date, a semi-detached cottage, Nos. 38 and 36, was erected. The intersection of Gladstone and Regent Street is now reached.

Across Gladstone Street was the enclosure containing the livery stables, fodder shed and cart sheds, pertaining to Mr. Rollings, the local butcher and also a man of mark, and wealth, in many spheres of the life of Kogarah. These premises were built, in rough style, of vertical slabs of hardwood, no doubt dating back many years prior to our discovery. However, this heterogeneous collection of buildings and out-houses were removed about 1906 or so, and their site occupied by a series of small-single fronted brick cottages, which in turn, within the last year or so, have been demolished to make way for an extension of the school playground, or, perhaps, some future development.

Then came the "Boys'" playground alignment of Kogarah Superior Public School, which, in our time of review, was bordered by a row of Box trees and panelled with a picket fence arranged along the top of a steep earthen bank about three feet in height above the street footpath level. This bank was later contained within a brick wall when the Municipal Council decided to brick pave the footpath. Entrance to the school was made by a centrally placed gateway and a set of three or four steps, made necessary to gain the higher level of the completely barren and gravelly surfaced playground. At the western-most corner of the school ground was a huge Port Jackson fig tree which over-shadowed Regent Street, a large portion of the school ground and the primitive seats for the scholars beneath, and also the adjoining two storeyed house, No. 26, later occupied by the Reuter family. This beautiful tree, which lifted Regent Street out of the common place from a scenic point of view, was subsequently removed by the Education Department, an institution sadly in need of self-education insofar as its attitude to trees on its properties are concerned. Also over-shadowed by the fig tree was the long weatherboard building housing the "Boys'" manual arts class room, under the doughty control of Major St. John Lamb who, as a school teacher, had strict ideas on discipline and a strong arm in its administration. At the northern end of the same building was the Girls'" cooking school, where the little dears learned to make scones and prepare meals etc., and also to test the sticking qualities of the dough on the wooden ceiling far above.

The two-storeyed house adjoining the western side of the school playground frontage, No. 26 Regent Street, is of unusual design and incorporates, in addition to a front upstairs verandah, a full length first floor side verandah from which a most expansive view eastwards over the foreshores of Botany Bay, and across this land locked body of water to the entrance heads on the far side. The view is now hidden by a three-storeyed school building which has been built with its frontage against the footpath in Regent Street.

Next door was a vacant block, later occupied by a group of four single-fronted brick cottages, Nos. 24, 22, 20 and 18. However, No. 18 has been demolished to make way, together with a vacant block and a furniture shop, for the elaborate office of the "Associated Securities Limited, which is numbered 14 to 18 on the street list. The furniture shop was owned by Mr. Woolnough but the business changed hands from time to time. The printing works, No. 12, was erected in 1906 by David Christian, who published the well known weekly newspaper titled the St. George Call. This business eventually came under the control of the late Clement John Kelly, a very pleasant and amiable gentleman, who for many

years was Minister's Warden and a chorister of St. Paul's Church of England, Kogarah. His sons now run the old established business.

A branch of the undertaking and embalming business firm of Wood Coffill and Company was sited in No. 10, whilst No. 8 was a Florist's Shop. The site was later adapted for the needs of a fish and chip shop and has now blossomed into "John's Sea Foods", a much more euphonius title for this class of emporium. No. 6 has been a boot repairing shop for many years, whilst Rodger's Buildings cover both Nos. 4 and 2, which housed, on the ground floor, the real estate firm of Ayscough and Meurant, who were succeeded by Peach Brothers, and others, and is occupied by Messrs. McLennan and Paine, who follow the same occupation. The first floor of Rodger's Building was given over to sundry solicitors and also to Mr. Rodgers, a dentist, who once specialised in tooth extractions, with all the accompanying woe, at one shilling per tooth, painless extractions, not always as claimed, were at a slightly higher rate.

Across the intersection of Railway Parade North, was a high and unlovely bank of earth, a left over from the construction of the Kogarah Railway Station in the early eighteen-eighties, graced by a few stunted and grotesquely shaped shrubs. This area was considerably fore-shortened about 1907 to form space to accommodate a pair of standage sidings for the Sans Souci Steam Tramway carriages, and also to provide facilities for the horse cab rank and horse coaches plying to Sylvania, and also to the Moorefield Race Course when meetings were being held. The unlovely banks still remains, awaiting a long overdue beautification treatment.

At this juncture we have reached the western end of Regent Street, and now return to Rocky Point Road to continue along, in a similar manner, the course of Regent Street on its southern side.

The intersection of Rocky Point Road was marked by a long paling fence surrounding the Oddfellow's Hall, a brick building which still stands, though its facade has been given over to a couple of shops. Behind the building were a couple of conveniences, one for each sex, which were united to stand over, in pre-sewerage days, a deep and loathsome pit, the terror and horror of young children and some not so young females. Then came a long and narrow paddock, fenced with posts and rails, which served as somebody's agistment paddock, and was dotted with odd clumps of the indigenous tea-tree. At the inner corner of the bend in Regent Street was a longish single-fronted brick cottage, which still remains today as No. 71. It was once occupied by Mrs. and Miss Garlick, the latter being a very tiny school teacher at Kogarah Superior Public School. Mrs. Garlick was also of short stature and usually dressed in black clothes. The back-yard of the cottage was covered by a dense mass of foliage which afforded excellent shade for a large egg-laying community of fowls. These birds roamed at will in the adjacent agistment paddock, but were, or seemed to be, always under the watchful eye of Mrs. Garlick, as it was necessary to keep away prowling dogs and egg-thieving young boys. Tragedy hit this little house when Mrs. Garlick died, and her grief-stricken daughter, who made no arrangements for her burial, eventually had to be taken away for treatment at an asylum.

Then came another block of vacant land, given over to household rubbish, which outcast material was generally thrown over the nearest fence, on an out-of-sight, out-of-mind basis, prior to the establishment of regular garbage collection services to the community at large. The rear fence, against St. Paul's Churchyard was angled to conform with the former boundary line of Franck's property as originally granted to this gentleman. A two-storeyed house, of "standard pattern"

with an upstairs front verandah, enclosed at the sides, was met at No. 59. This place was occupied by an elderly gentleman known to the local youth as "Daddy Briggs", owing to his scrubby beard and non-descript appearance. He was usually to be seen pushing a decrepit hand-cart, seeking out-dated and discarded newspapers, for subsequent sale to butchers, greengrocers, and fish merchants, for wrapping purposes. He also frequented the highways and byways in the hope of beating the boys in the collection of bottles and odd pieces of string, then, as now, always handy to tie up this and that commodity. One would like to know more of Mr. Briggs. Adjoining his house, on the western side was a vacant piece of land with its depth following the alignment of Gladstone Street

Crossing Gladstone Street to the opposite corner we encountered an old-fashioned two-storeyed shop, divided into two units, the first being occupied by Mr. Hayward, a dark visaged gentleman with black whiskers, who retailed, amongst other things, a choice line of home-made toffee which he sold at one-halfpenny a piece. A second unit was in use by a gentleman engaged in the repairing of boots and shoes and the sale of blacking for same. Next door was the fenced horse paddock belonging to Mr. Allen, the local baker, who lived in the large double-fronted villa now listed as No. 43A. The bakehouse was located at the rear of these premises, abutting on to the back laneway. This edifice, which still stands, was centrally divided at ground floor level by a driveway that was roofed over by the beams of the first floor flour storage room. The ovens, fired with billets of wood, were on the eastern side of the cart-driveway, and the all pervading and appetising smell of newly baked bread, early in the morning (as they always baked at night) wafted over the immediate neighbourhood. At the western corner of the property was a little double-fronted shop, built of weatherboard and numbered as 41, and distinguished by an overhanging pepper, or pepperina tree, the scarlet berries of which were in much demand for ammunition for pea-shooters. The shop kept a great range of lollies for the delectation of school-children, and the elderly lady showed great judgment in catering for the halfpennies and pennies of the boys from the school ground on the opposite side of the street. The two windows of the premises were full of marbles of various kinds, from commonoes, glassies with their interwoven stripes of internal colour, to agates and connies, the latter being priced as high as threepence each, and highly valued also as the last word in winning taws. Then there were tops and shuttlecocks and spare cords for same, whilst licorice straps, telephone wires and pipes of the same black substance, together with an assortment of milk poles, silver sammies, ginger bread rabbits and pink and also white fat little sugar pigs, all of which formed portion of a rapturous window display for blokes ranging in age from five to perhaps thirteen years of age. There was also the added attraction of a large sulphur-crested cockatoo, who was supposed to swear, but as far as we knew, never did.

Hard against this attractive emporium was a small weatherboar shop, which still exists as No. 39, and had both a length and a width of about ten feet, with doors back and front, a counter of narrow dimensions, and a small divided window at the front against the door. Ensconced therein, surrounded by boots, lasts, awls and all the paraphernalia of a boot repairer of note, sat John Thomas, a most pleasant man known to numerous cheeky boys as Fatty Thomas. He had an unerring aim with a boot or shoe which he hurled at force through the open doorway at any impertinent boy standing without the shop and within the line of fire, thus bringing into effect many a howl of anguish, which made the aforesaid cockatoo screech with delight.



John Thomas lived in a natty double-fronted brick house, No. 37, immediately at the rear of his little shop. Next door was the double fronted house, set well back against the rear laneway, occupied by Mr. Jarvis, a plumber by trade and well known in the district. The front garden was distinguished by a pair of Norfolk Island pine trees, but these have vanished to make way for several shops, one, on the corner of Premier Street, dealing in second-hand furniture and household knick-nacks from crockery to carpet sweepers.

Crossing the intersection of Premier Street, we reach a small box-shaped single room of weatherboard which was in use by Mr. Willows as an estate agency. The corner block has been taken over to build a modern shop, and the little box has been removed bodily to the back yard where it can still be glimpsed above the paling fence level. Next door, at No. 29, was the general store of Mr. Worby, a tallish man of serious mien, who had a sandy coloured beard of no great merit. In addition to groceries he catered for the sweets associated with the school-children and one of the high lights afforded to message going kids was to watch the meticulous way in which sugar was weighed in half pound or one pound paper bags. A most slow and exacting process, a little being added, or a little being subtracted until the scale evenly balanced. Mr. Worby was a most honest man and it was a shame that young hoodlums enjoyed bowling stones through his front door and into the shop. A large trade was also carried out by Mr. Worby in selling pieces of dismembered wooden butter-boxes, which were sold, according to size, at one halfpenny or one penny, to pupils of Major St. John Lamb's manual training classes, where they eventually reappeared in the guise of soap boxes, knife-boxes and other such like wooden articles, which were proudly taken home to mumma and subsequently thrown out in the dust-bin as being of no further use.

A fenced vacant allotment, now a series of shops numbered as 27, 25 and 23 was passed to reach the butchering establishment of Mr. Joseph Keep at Nos. 21 and 19. According to Miss Elizabeth Whitehall, this once large two-storeyed building was originally designed and built as an hotel, but did not function as such owing to difficulty in obtaining the necessary licence. The shop was open to the street during business hours and closed at night by placing a series of interlocking vertical wooden shutters across the opening, the whole being kept in place and locked there by means of a long bar of flat steel adapted for the purpose, which in turn was secured to a hasp by a huge brass padlock. Just inside this opening was a horizontal meat rail, suspended from the ceiling, from which the carcasses of sheep were hung, exposed to the winds and dust that blew, the flies that flew, and the inspecting hands of boys feeling the the kidneys still attached inside each body. A couple of huge wooden chopping blocks, a counter, tall scales of suspended pattern, and a table full of salted corn beef and brisket, together with a large ice cooled chamber in one corner completed the furnishings of the shop. Festoons of meaty sausages, quite different in appearance to the bread and fat commodities of today, dangled from the rail above and near the scale, likewise slivers of tripe, livers, sundry bullocks hearts, tails and other comestibles calculated to tempt the jaded appetite. The floor was slippery with saw-dust which, when a gusty wind was blowing, proved a nuisance both to the butcher and the customers as it tended to obscure the meat and get into the eyes and nostrils of the beholder. Still this was normal butchering practice of the period under review and it was at a much later date before the health laws and refrigeration, together with glassed in windows (with water trickling down inside the glass) became a legal requirement. The back premises of Mr. Keep were most interesting

as seen through the glassed in partition at the rear of the shop. There was a court yard, always scrupulously clean, shaded by the branches of a large tree, where the cutting carts were kept. The Keep family comprised eleven sons and one daughter, if our memory is correct. The eldest boy, David, became a veterinary doctor, whilst another one was nicknamed "Dollar" on account of his remarkable display of gold teeth. Then there was "Dugger", who was well known and liked as a conductor on the Sans Souci steam tramway.

Next door to the premises of Mr. Keep was a white painted single storeyed and double-fronted cottage, set well back from Regent Street, to which access was given by a long path leading from the gate inserted in the front picket fence. The front yard was ill-kept and covered with a wild entanglement of coarse grass and an interesting growth of the more common weeds. About 1906 the Bank of Australasia took over the premises and erected a new building at the street alignment, which was subsequently taken over by the Australian and New Zealand Bank. A vacant block, insofar as its street and back lane boundaries were concerned, was in line, after which a two-storeyed boot and shoe shop was met. These premises about 1910 or so were taken over by Mr. Campling, a dentist who came from the corner of Firth and Belmore Streets, Arncliffe. Next in succession was a wooden-fronted produce store, where bags of chaff were stacked to the roof level, and corn, wheat, oats, poultry feed, were kept in large wooden bins, fitted with lids, and ladled out as required in immense scoops of galvanised iron. The top of the bins afforded resting places for a great number of cats who were kept in comfort on account of their mouse and rat hunting proclivities.

Between this produce store and the corner shop listed as No. 1 was, and still remains as such, a narrow strip of land, about 18 inches in width which is evidentially classified as "no man's land". Mr. Stark occupied No. 1 Regent Street as a grocer's shop, in which the counter ran the full length of about thirty feet or so. The front, or customer's side of the counter, was stacked with biscuit tins, four rows, one on top of the other. As a space saving storage arrangement this scheme was ideal, and it also had its uses for the local lads who lined up in force awaiting their turn to be served. In their midst would be one busily engaged in slitting the paper label from around the top lid of the biscuit tin with either the edge of a coin or a more convenient pen-knife blade. The tin being duly broached many hands would make sharp work amongst the Vo-Vo Mixed, Splendo Jellies, Coconut Buttons, and other fancy biscuits, which were always chosen with great care. Mr. Stark became most annoyed with this scheme which ate literally into his profits, and finally overcame the trouble by turning the top row of tins upside down and keeping a watchful eye on the habits of his younger customers, thereby losing a lot of business in other commodities. Mrs. Stark conducted a first class dressmaking business on these premises. When the grocery business closed down a wine shop took over the corner site and in recent years a chemist came into occupation.

The intersection of Montgomery Street marked the termination of Regent Street, although the straight southern alignment of the latter street is continued across the intersection as forming part of Railway Parade. The steam trams from Sans Souci, whistling madly to clear traffic away from its single sharply curved track, emerged from Montgomery Street at extremely slow speed to gain a complete change of direction at the Kogarah Station foot-bridge.

The foregoing story, perhaps, will serve to convey a glimpse as to the general appearance in some detail as to the conditions and a few of the people who resided in Regent Street at the early part of this century. The description is, we feel, lucid enough to warrant a similar journey in this year of grace in order to compare what is new with what is old, and what has disappeared from human ken.