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ROCKDALE MUNICIPAL COUNCIL



PRICE 5 c .

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY BULLETIN

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24 Duff Street,
ARNCLIFFE. 2205.

August 1982.

Dear Friend and Member,

The August Meeting will be held as follows:-

- Date: Friday Evening, August 20th, 1982, at 8.00 p.m.
- Place: Council Chamber, Town Hall, Princes Highway, Rockdale.
- Business: General.

Syllabus Item: "Peter Dillon", Naval Man. Mrs. D. Hatton, assisted by
Dr. D.J. Hatton, will be Guest Speakers on this occasion.
You will find this address very interesting.

Supper Roster: Mrs. Thompson, Captain, together with Mrs. Troughton, Mrs. Grace
and Mrs. Hunt.

Ladies please bring a plate.

Mr. R. Lee,
President.
 Phone 599 1244.

Mrs. B. Perkins,
Publicity Officer.
 Phone 587 9164.

Mrs. E. Eardley,
Sec. & Bulletin Ed.
 Phone 59 8078.

Mrs. E. Wright,
Treasurer.
 Phone 599 4884.

Miss D. Row,
Social Secretary.
 Phone 50 9300.

Mr. A. Ellis,
Research Officer.
 Phone 587 1159.

"Don't give up, it is often the last key in the bunch
which opens the door."

..... Friendship Book 1971.

Many of our Members have been and still are ill. Remembering Mrs. Aitken, Mrs. Turton and Mr. Dixon. We are sorry to hear this, and hope they will all be well again soon.

SPECIAL NOTICE.

The St. George Historical Society is pleased to announce that the following books, written and illustrated by the late Gifford H. Eardley for the Society, have been reprinted and are now available. No.8 Book was compiled by Mrs. Bronwyn Perkins.

- No. 1 "The Wollli Creek Valley"
- No. 2 "Kogarah to Sans Souci Tramway"
- No. 3 "Saywells Tramway -- Rockdale to Lady Robinson's Beach"
- No. 4 "Arncliffe to Bexley Tramway"
- No. 5 "Our Heritage in Stone"
- No. 6 "All Stations to Como"
- No. 7 "Tempe and the Black Creek Valley"
- No. 8 "Early Churches of the St. George District:"
- No. 9 "Early Settlers of the St. George District" -- should be available later this year.

All books now available at \$1.25 per copy - plus current rate of postage.

For your copy of the above books, please contact one of the following:-

Mrs. E. Wright - Phone 599 4884, Miss B. Otton - Phone 59 4259 (after 8 p.m.)
Mrs. E. Eardley - Secretary - Phone 59 8078, Mr. A. Ellis - Phone 587 1159.

Also available is a very interesting book - "Tempe - East Hills Railway", by B.J. Madden. Published by Hurstville Historical Society. Price \$1.80 per copy. Postage extra. Phone 599 4884, 59 8078.

The Research Project. Book No. 9, "Early Settlers of the St. George District", is ready for printing. We would like to thank those members who contributed. Your efforts are greatly appreciated. We would like to present a second book similar to the above. Will you help???

Visitors are always welcome at our meetings.

SOCIAL NEWS.

The following outings have been arranged by our Social Secretary for your pleasure; we do hope Miss Row will have your support.

A Day at the Blue Mountains, to see the Rhododendrons, which should be at their best at this time of the year.

Date: Saturday, November 13th, 1982.

Meeting Place: Western side of Rockdale Station.

Time: 8.30 A.M. SHARP.

Cost: \$6.00 per person.

ALSO, a Proposed 3-day Midweek Tour of Orange - Bathurst and surrounding districts.

Suggested date: Some time in April 1983.

Autumn is beautiful in these areas. Details later.

ST. GEORGE HISTORICAL
INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

SOCIETY
YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE 1982

INCOME

Members' Subscriptions
R.A.H.S. (Cultural Grant)
Members' Donations
Badge Sales
Sale Society Books
Tempe-East Hills Book
Bus Trips
Raffles and sale cakes
Anniversary Dinner (balance)
Afternoon Teas Lydham Hall
Bank Interest

634.10
200.00
73.00
11.00
481.27
52.15
431.00
177.90
238.00
23.00
32.65
2354.07

Balance in bank 30/6/81
Less unrepresented cheque

1234.61
20.72
1213.89
\$3567.96

EXPENDITURE

Pink Panther Printing Co.
Ainslee Lodge - Dinner
Murstville Society Books
Mrs. Eardley - Postages
Mrs. Wright - petty cash
Mrs. Eardley - petty cash
Christmas Catering
R.A.H.Society - 2 Delegates Conference
National Trust Subscription
Mrs. Perkins - material book 9
Blytheways Bus Co.
Australia Post - Annual Subscription
R.A.H.S. Annual Subscription

394.00
1002.00
90.00
252.65
51.00
41.57
98.55
60.00
24.00
50.93
310.00
20.00
17.50

Balance in bank 30/6/82
Cash in hand

\$2412.20
1152.76
3.00
\$3567.96

I certify that I have examined the books of account, vouchers, cheque butts and bank statements presented by Mrs. E. Wright as treasurer of the above society and in my opinion this represents a true statement of its financial affairs as at 30th June, 1982.

F. W. X. Lumsden
Auditor 7/7/82

34/224/3

LYDHAM HALL FUND RAISING COMMITTEE
FOR YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE 1982

INCOME

Lydham Hall Admittances	\$637.60
Cake Sales	5.70
Raffles	102.60
Donations	67.45
Century of Progress Sales	46.50
St. George Historical Society Books sold	241.25
Lydham Hall Teaspoons	202.00
Hurstville Historical Society Books sold	9.60
Donation received 30/6/82	1.40
Sale additional Hurstville Historical Society book	1.60
Bank interest	14.31
Cash in bank 30/6/81	780.54
Cash in hand "	1.00
 Grand Total	 \$2111.55

Capital Investment in St. George Building
Society Account No. 111 973 702 Credit \$1662.15
including interest to date \$137.63.
Value of teaspoons on hand \$148.00

LYDHAM HALL FUND RAISING COMMITTEE
FOR YEAR ENDING 30th JUNE 1982

EXPENDITURE

Rockdale Municipal Council - balance for show cases etc.	\$1000.00
Century of Progress Books	40.00
Petty Cash	55.00
St. George Historical Society books	231.15
Leader Advertisement	91.70
Christmas Raffle 1981	30.00
Perfection Plate for teaspoons	172.37
Cash in bank	487.33
Cash in hand	4.00
 Grand Total	 \$2111.55

I certify that I have examined the books of account, vouchers, cheque butts, bank statements and building society passbook presented by Miss B. Otton as treasurer of the above committee and in my opinion this represents a true statement of its financial affairs as at 30th June, 1982.

Paul D. ...
Auditor
5/7/82.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Year 1981-82.

- R.F. Lee, President.
16th July, 1982.

Ladies & Gentlemen:

It is with pleasure that I submit this report, on the occasion of the 1982 Annual Meeting of the St. George Historical Society.

The Society has reached its majority. Twenty-one years have now passed since the Public Meeting was held, in these Council Chambers, on the 21st June, 1961, to discuss the proposed formation of a local Historical Society. This led to the first meeting of the Society being held in the following month.

The twelve months period now under review has been one of continued activity, commensurate with that of previous years. Membership of the Society has increased, the monthly meetings have continued to be extremely well attended and the fellowship, which is distinctive of the Society, has continued to grow.

Guest Speakers who have addressed members at Society Meetings invariably are well versed in their chosen subjects and contribute much to the success of these evenings. Such people who spend much of their spare time for the enlightenment and enjoyment of others are to be congratulated and their efforts gratefully acknowledged.

I extend a warm welcome to members who have joined the Society during the previous twelve months and trust that their new found interest will bring them happiness and enjoyment.

Visitors are always welcome at our meetings and I encourage members to invite friends and guests who may have interests similar to ours.

During the year some of our members have been ill. This is regretted and to those still unwell, the hope of an early recovery is accorded.

For myself and also on behalf of members, I express sincere appreciation to the Vice Presidents and other Officers of the Society, including all members of the Management Committee, for their assistance and support throughout the year.

Again, special thanks are due to our Hon. Secretary - Mrs. Eardley, and to our Hon. Treasurer - Mrs. Wright. The efforts of these two ladies constitutes an incalculable contribution to the success of this Society. Much of their work, generally performed unnoticed, is more extensive and time consuming than most of us realise.

I acknowledge also, the support given in many ways to Mrs. Eardley and Mrs. Wright by various members of the Society. They assist anonymously, but their efforts are appreciated.

Rockdale Municipal Council. The Society continues to be endowed with beneficence from its sponsor - Rockdale Municipal Council. The courtesy and generous assistance given to the Society by the Council, including its Officers and Staff, is again acknowledged and appreciated. It is significant and highly esteemed by the Society that its two Patrons are the Mayor, Alderman R.W. Rathbone, and the Town Clerk, Mr. R. Fuller.

Management Committee. This Committee has continued to meet regularly. The meetings have been well attended and the contribution by each Member has been significant. An important function of the Committee is to consider relevant and important matters requiring attention. Conclusions arrived at by the Committee are submitted as recommendations to the Society for its consideration and determination.

Activities of the Society. The Society, as in previous years, has been successfully involved in various activities associated with its aims and these include:-

Research Projects. The Society is extremely fortunate to have as its Research Officer, Mr. Arthur Ellis, who so capably and with much zeal fulfils this position. The resolute and thorough manner with which Mr. Ellis pursues his subjects is an encouraging guide to other members. I recommend to all members the paper by Mr. Ellis, published in the current (July 1982) Bulletin of the Society, entitled "The Parishes of 'Mintaville'."

It is a valuable piece of research. Its author is to be congratulated.

Further progress has been made with the project "Early Settlers of the St. George District", which will be Book No. 9 in the series published through the Society. Enquiries are afoot in preparation for printing, and it is hoped that the project will soon be available to the public. To those members who have contributed to this project I extend thanks and appreciation. It is envisaged that this research be ongoing and if possible another book produced as an extension of the current work. Therefore all members able and desirous of joining this research are invited to discuss the matter with Mr. Ellis or a member of the Management Committee.

Royal Australian Historical Society. The St. George Historical Society values its affiliation with the Royal Australian Historical Society. At the last Conference of Affiliated Societies our elected delegates were Mrs. B. Perkins and Mr. A. Ellis.

Thanks are due to these members for ably and loyally representing this Society.

Heritage Week 1982 - held in March, was celebrated with equal success to that of the previous year.

I acknowledge and thank all those members who contributed to the success of the various activities at this time. Guest speaker at our Heritage Week meeting, Alderman Rathbone, was as usual, superlative.

Also during the year, members attended various other related functions, including:-

Rockdale Municipal Council: Australia Day Civic Reception.

St. George Church - Hurstville: Anniversary Service and Lecture.

Anniversary of the Landing of Captain Cook at Kurnell.

Third Annual Waldron-McCarthy Memorial Lecture. This occasion, organised by Hurstville Historical Society, was extremely well attended by members of the St. George Historical Society. Guest Speaker, Alderman R.W. Rathbone, was in his usual excellent form. Hurstville Historical Society was most capably represented by President, Mr. B.J. Madden, and Hon. Secretary, Dr. D.J. Hatton, also many of their fellow members. On behalf of St. George Historical Society, I extend congratulations for the success of a most enjoyable afternoon and thanks to the members of Hurstville Historical Society for their hospitality.

I suggest that such occasions, which develop amicable contact between neighbouring Societies, is to be encouraged.

Lydham Hall: Continues under the direction of the Lydham Hall Local Committee. As you know, the Committee is composed of representatives from Rockdale Municipal Council and this Society. As a member of the Committee and Curator, Miss Otton continues to administer the maintenance and operation of Lydham Hall, making it an exceptionally fine example of restored history.

I am sure that members who have visited other restored properties will agree that by enthusiasm and dedication, the standard set at Lydham is extremely high.

To those members who so selflessly assist at Lydham, I extend thanks and appreciation. Nevertheless, Miss Otton still requires volunteers to help in conducting visitors through the building. Members who are able and who are not already partaking of this enjoyable and rewarding activity, are recommended to see Miss Otton.

Visitors to Lydham Hall come from overseas, interstate, country districts and from all over the Metropolitan Area. It is interesting to note that parties of school children from time to time are taken, by their teachers, to make study visits. Also, tertiary students such as from the Alexander Mackie College have shown keen interest in what Lydham Hall has to offer.

A very large party from the Young National Trust made a visit on Sunday, 23rd May, 1982. This was a most successful afternoon.

Organised Tours and Outings - of historical interest - have continued to be well received and successful.

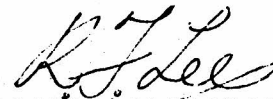
Warm appreciation and thanks to Mrs. Wright, our recently retired Social Secretary, who for many years so ably organised these functions.

Best wishes to Miss Row, our new Social Secretary, a worthy successor to this, at times onerous, position.

In conclusion, I extend sincere thanks and appreciation to all members for the courtesy and kindness which I have received throughout the year.

I also pay tribute to those ladies who so graciously provide and prepare supper at the conclusion of our meetings.

I trust that the incoming twelve months will be a period of further progress and achievement for the Society and of happiness for each member.



.....

PRESIDENT.

ONLY A TREE IS LEFT ...

- *The Sun*
 - November 7th 1955.
 - Supplied by Mrs E Eardley.

Only a privileged few have been aware that a Moreton Bay fig tree, at the edge of Railway Square, has seen all that we regard as progressive in that part of Old Sydney.

To those people whose minds dwell on the iron horse, in its centenary year, or on the wonders worked with steel and concrete, in stone, and in brick, there may appear nothing very remarkable in the presence of a tree, even as a contrast.

But one man has been watching that tree, exulting, perhaps, in a singular piece of knowledge. *"That fig tree was growing in the front of the Christ Church Rectory, when it was occupied by the late Canon C.F. Garmsey,"* says ruddy faced Walter Rodd, who has celebrated a jubilee of secretarial service with the Benevolent Society. *"His son, Arthur Garmsey, who was Warden of St. Paul's College, played at the foot of the tree when he was a boy. As the ground was raised for the new railway station early in this century, the fig was left in its old position, and what you see today is the top of that original tree."*

It is a marvel that the tree was spared, for even more important things were not allowed to stand in the path of the oncoming iron horse.

For example, Ruskin Rowe, the architect, helped in the architectural supervision of the transfer of the old Devonshire St. cemetery to Botany. *"The sand and debris and many a convict's bones also went out to the swampy lake behind the university,"* he remembers. *"Four and six a load of 20 cubic feet. We had an army of drays and the drivers were satisfied to take two or three loads a day. We had to fill in 38 ft. The Vet. Science School is there now."*

Sir Thomas Anderson Stuart was on the building committee, and the one day he said 'Take all the convicts' bones and fill the hole for the horse doctors'. I stood up and said, 'Andy, Not all convicts. My father was buried there and he was a soldier, a gentleman and an architect'."

There had been another stumbling block - the Benevolent Asylum, or Society, to give it the better-known title. The railway had been anxious to push right into town from early times. Some wanted a terminal in King St., and though they were prevented from achieving their desires, in one way they succeeded unexpectedly, as witness the under-ground system. Others were quite satisfied with Redfern, which was closer to town in those days.

Even the mild advance of the present Central Railway Station to the site of the cemetery and adjacent ground was a major step.

"They said that E.W.O'Sullivan was mad," says Rodd, "but we know that he got his way, and that the cemetery and asylum and so much more was moved out. With the asylum went a little quadrant of land behind a hoarding. This was the place where the Fitzgeralds, Wirths and others had set up their circus rings and for which they paid toll to the asylum. The hoardings too yielded a nice little income to the organisers of benevolence - Hollander and Govett paid up pounds 900 a year for their advertising," quotes Rodd.

But the tree held its place. What sentiment lay behind the decision?

It may have been a concession to the early associations of that tree. To gain a fuller perspective, we possibly could see a tiny seedling on *"one of the sandhills lying south of the Brickfields"* in the 1820's.

From the Brickfields we would need to cross a valley separating these sandhills, to ford a small stream meandering from the region of the Surry Hills, and emptying into Cockel Bay (later Darling Harbor) where Hay St. meets George St.

We would disturb wild fowl on our way to the new *"Asylum for the Poor Blind, Aged and Infirm"*, and with luck would have climbed the sandhill, covered with scrub and wild flowers, in company with the Benevolent Society's founder, Edward Smith Hall, afterward editor of the Monitor.

First we would pass Carters' Barracks, where Sergeant "Daddy" Scott preached his sermons, as a lay preacher. Late comers to this pilgrimage would have found the site of Carters' Barracks next to the old tram running sheds. These housed those noisy juggernauts, the steam trams, which somewhat balefully glared at horses and pedestrians with one great eye, and shrieked on the slightest provocation, in unnecessarily fair warning.

The hunting noise of the engine, and the rattle of the trailer, surely was sufficient to tell of their presence and purpose.

The trams provided a railway experience in miniature when they crossed a somewhat different Belmore Park from Elizabeth St. on their way to the Redfern Station. They had a little perway of their own; they were not shut in by a fence, and when they breathed fiery defiance as they chugged under the little iron bridge, what was more natural than that they should be subjected to stones being thrown down their chimney stacks from the bridge?

Perhaps your interests took you to the green door of the Home of the Good Samaritan, opposite the old gasholders, which were still known as the South Sydney Gasholders into this century.

The Good Samaritans know of two streets that have disappeared - Carter St., which was there in the '60's, and Belmore Rod., identified with macabre picturesqueness by those who have a tongue for the apposite, as "*dead man's road*".

The Samaritans were neighbours of the Sydney Female Refuge, a rather forbidding title and building for the frail and necessitous.

This may have been related to an earlier institution on the same location, "*in which stood that old instrument of punishment, the treadmill*".

It clanks with convicts chains against good principles, and undoubtedly its only place is in a history book.

Beyond Eddy Av. was the path that led to the Mounted Police Ba-racks, and then came The Cottage. The Cottage calls up memories of "Bluff old John" McLerie, who was in residence as magistrate and superintendent of police, when Mrs Keith Stewart was turning the first sod for the NSW railways in 1850.

McLerie had fought in the Maori War, and had been principal jailer at Darlinghurst. Unbeknown to him, one of his mounted policemen was a son of a baronet. The new mountie, the well-verified legend relates, maintained a discreet silence about his antecedents, until a letter addressed to Sir Frederick Pottinger, c/o the Inspector-General of Police, came into McLerie's hands by accident. It was McLerie, who got his man, the mountie, away from chasing bushrangers, as a result of the chance disclosure and soon there was a new sub-inspector, a baronet, on his staff.

In later years, after his death, McLerie, who has earned the honor of being the father of the police force, was criticised indirectly by his successor, Edmund Fosbery, who also lived at the Cottage. Fosbery held the opinion that the force which he himself joined in 1862, consisted of men of doubtful character; he took his place as second in charge to McLerie, to eliminate this weakness.

The tree is a mute witness of all of these things, a quaint parcel of social history all buried beneath the great railway.

It has a memory of a veteran caretaker, Edward Broomfield, "*seated on the veranda of a little cottage*", in the grounds of the old cemetery, and shares his knowledge and pride of the pioneers, as much of George Howe, the printer, as of J.W.Lewin, the artist. Of a Forbes and a Dowling. Of memorials to wealth. Of memorials to wisdom; of some not distinguished.

No doubt the tree would remember certain happenings of the changeover

to the new station when Redfern was superseded.

The official records say that *"the transfer of traffic from the old to the new was carried out in one night ... one of the smartest pieces of railway work in Australian history. The tramway loop was cut ... shortly after 9.0'clock on Saturday night. At 5.50a.m. the Western Mail train ran through to the new station."*

We can't ask a tree to verify all of that, even though we know that it knows.

Let us turn to an outsider, an old correspondent of mine, William Bricknell, of Newport. He claims that there was a mix-up with signals and trains backed up everywhere. *"I am certain of this,"* he adds, *"because I had to come in from Prospect to Hurstville looking for my sister, who was held up for three-quarters of an hour just outside Central Station."*

Naturally these things were inseparable from a changeover, and in the light of all the great achievements, none would specially care to record a black mark.

The railway opened up the country in a way that no other type of transport could envisage or accomplish; when there were turnpikes every 10 miles and less to create barriers to progress, while small moneys were collected to forward it.

Within sight of that Moreton Bay fig, where Pitt St., joins George St., at Railway Square, was the mightiest turnpike, the most ornate, the daddy of them all. But the railways bypassed all that.

It is something for us and our tree, to remember.

A story was written about a tree in Brooklyn, but can it compare with the tales of a tree in our own Railway Square, watching the trains go out?
