

St George Historical Society Bulletin

July - September , 2015



Captain Cook
Bridge turned
50 years old on
29th May 2015.
This photograph
(3.9.1963)
comes from the
Arthur Ellis
Collection at the
St George
Historical
Society

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**Meetings are held on the third Saturday of each month
(Except December & January)**

**Here are our meeting dates for the second half of 2015
18th July(AGM), 15th August, 19th September, 17th October,
21st November.**

**Next Meeting: 18th July, AGM, 2015
at Sans Souci Library**

Contributions to this bulletin, articles, photographs, news, notes, diary dates, reviews etc., are always welcome - please contact the editor, Garry Darby, 9583 9916 garry@garrydarby.com

**The St George Historical Society web site may be accessed
at**

<http://stgeorgehistsoc.org.au>

**The St George Historical Society Facebook page may be
seen at**

St George Historical Society Inc

News & Notes

🕒 Gloria Henke has not been well. Secretary Laurice advised in early May that Gloria was hospitalized. We wish her well and a speedy recovery. JUNE UPDATE, Gloria is at home and recovering well.

🕒 The date has been set for our next “Collectibles Fair” at Lydham Hall. It will be held on SUNDAY 20TH SEPTEMBER. - straight into the diary with this one because we need ‘all hands on deck’ that day and before. President Bernie will need lots of help.

🕒 About Trove Again: A group of interested organisations headed by Kogarah Historical Society is currently in the process of arranging for another 10 years of the “St George Call” to be digitalised, indexed and placed on line prior to December 2015. The first decade chosen (1914 to 1923) was placed on line during December 2014 and has proved to be an outstanding success and a wonderful resource for scholars, researchers and students right across Australia. Our St George Historical Society was one of the generous contributors to this historically significant achievement.

🕒 New Members are needed for the St George Historical Society. It has been suggested that ALL members make a special effort and turn up for the August meeting and BRING A FRIEND WITH THEM ! We should then have about 60 people at the meeting. Will you help your Society ?

🕒 Interested in Family History ? - Botany Bay Family History Society was founded in 1984 and was formed to assist members in their family history research by providing a meeting place for genealogists and family historians to pursue their common interests. Their library and research centre is located at the Port Hacking Community Centre, 184 Gannons Road (south) Caringbah in the Sutherland Shire, approximately 30kms south of Sydney in New South Wales Australia. Meetings are held on the first Wednesday of the month, excepting January, in the Elouera Room at Tradies, on the Kingsway at Gymea

Guest Speaker Reviews - Laurice Bondfield

The Society has been very fortunate so far this year to have some very interesting guest speakers.

In March we heard from Karen Pentland, Winner of 2014 Ron Rathbone Local History Prize about "The Bexley Flag". Karen shared the results of her thorough investigation of the



William Beekman one of the "Bexley Boys" that Kirsten Broderick spoke about at our last meeting.

Photo courtesy of the State Library of NSW

names embroidered on this Australian flag. The flag was created for the purpose of acknowledging the contribution of at least 1 pound to fundraising efforts by the local community for sending comforts to the troops during World War 1. Karen researched the names of these individuals and families, finding a remarkable amount about them. She may even have found the names of the family who created the flag. This is no mean feat, as the flag itself has disappeared and Karen had to work from a photo!

In April, Dr Garry Darby took us on a remarkable trip in time around Sans Souci, based on his book "Baths and Boatsheds: The Waterfront Community 1895-1965" telling tales of the families who built the boat sheds and hotels, the punt to Taren Point, the building of the Sans Souci Baths and the fortunes of its proprietors, stories of the steam tram, the sailing clubs and their champions. The talk attracted many local residents and descendants of some of the people mentioned in the presentation as well as lots of nostalgic memories in the questions and chat that followed.

May brought us more visitors keen to hear about "Bexley's Boys" who served in World War 1. This talk was originally given at Bexley Library by Kirsten Broderick, Rockdale Local Studies Specialist and was extremely popular, so much so that many people missed out. Giving it again meant that they had a chance to catch up. The stories Kirsten researched were sad and sombre, leavened here and there by humour and cases of good fortune. From such a small area - Bexley Council area was only 4 miles square- so many young men went away to war, never to return. The families from Harrow Road were a focus, they lost many sons, both to wounds and illness. Their letters to the army to try to find out more than a terse telegram could tell them are heartbreaking. For a council area that numbered among its residents a few families of German descent, there was little personal antagonism. Aside from renaming a street or two, there was no organised scapegoating. Indeed one of the first young men to sign up was William Beekman (christened Wilhelm) who served at Gallipoli, where he was wounded and then in France where he was killed.

June introduced us to Mary Ann Brownlow, courtesy of Angela Thomas, Secretary of Sutherland Shire Historical Society, who has written several books as Angela Badger. Angela

guided us on her journey to becoming an author, from her arrival as a migrant discovering the grave of Dickens' "Miss Havisham" to the discovery of the story of Mary Ann. What a shocking story that is! Mary Ann de Guise came from an aristocratic French family impoverished by the Revolution. Her father joined the NSW Corps and acquired land, some of which he left to Mary Ann. Unfortunately the law at that time did not allow women to own and manage property, so when she married George Brownlow, the management of the land was legally his. He sold off parts of it, despite her protests and then proposed bringing his mistress to live in their home. In a fury, she stabbed him in the arm, the wound became infected, and he died three days later. For this she was tried at Goulburn and sentenced to hang, much to the indignation of local people. The execution was delayed and delayed in expectation of a reprieve, but none came, and at 4pm she was hanged.

Angela Thomas believes that this case was one of the contributing factors to the passing many years later of the "Married Women's Property Act" which permitted women to own and manage properties in their own right. The listeners were enthralled by the unfolding of the events- many thanks to Angela for the research which brought this story to light.

Press Cuttings

ROCKDALE RIFLE CLUB.

The annual meeting of the Rockdale Rifle Club was held last night in the Town Hall, when, despite the wet weather, there was a crowded attendance. Mr. W. H. Lambeth (captain) presided. The annual report mentioned that notwithstanding many difficulties which had to be overcome the past year was the most successful in the history of the club. Forty-one members had passed the annual musketry course, and, after striking off those who had failed to go through, the roll showed a membership of 42. Financially, the club was on the wrong side of the ledger, the receipts showing £117/9/0, and after meeting all liabilities there was a debit balance of £1/19/0. Notwithstanding this handicap there was every prospect of the ensuing year being still more active for members. Prize money and trophies to the value of £38 had been distributed, which meant that members had been kept busy, despite the scarcity of targets. The report and balance sheet were adopted.

The election of officers for the ensuing year resulted as follows:—Patron, Mr. Johnson, M.H.R.; president, Ald. W. Taylor; senior-vice-president, Mr. E. W. R. McMillan; trustees, Messrs. J. G. Griffin, E. W. R. McMillan, H. Broe, W. H. Lambeth, and A. W. Bower; committee, Messrs. A. Wentworth, W. T. Tickle, A. W. Bower, and J. Nivens; selection committee, Messrs. P. H. Partridge, W. H. Lambeth, and W. Draper; captain, Mr. W. H. Lambeth; hon. secretary, Mr. P. H. Partridge; assistant hon. secretary, Mr. William Campbell; hon. treasurer, Mr. A. C. Marshall; auditors, Messrs. J. H. Grant and H. Talbot.

AN ECCENTRIC SWAGMAN.

AROUSES CURIOSITY AT KOGARAH.

Last Friday morning the St. George district police were informed that a new pair of boots, socks, and a cap had been found outside the residence of the Matterson family in Kogarah-road, Blakehurst. Later in the day news came to the police station from Mr. J. C. Gannon's home at Doll's Point that the contents of a swag were lying opened out upon the beach, with no signs of an owner at hand. The articles consisted of a suit of clothes, white shirt, slippers, tablecloth, sheet, blanket, hair brush, clothes brush, tooth brush and powder, and a hard hat—rather a unique collection for a swagman. Police investigations showed that the owner of the goods had made his way to an oyster lease in Kogarah Bay, had taken therefrom a skiff, and decamped. After leaving the boat high and dry in Grawley Bay he appears to have yielded to a desire to visit Sydney, and later the police were advised that a man had left his home at Redfern on Friday without hat or boots. Early on Saturday morning he was again seen in the vicinity of Matterson's, and his departure was marked by the absence of a favourite dog. This dog eventually proved the means of bringing the man into safe custody, for on Saturday evening he was discovered, hatless and bootless, running at full speed after the dog, who was making for home. When the police arrived, the man, whose name proved to be J. McGrath, was found in a Chinese garden, eating melons and tomatoes. He was secured and taken to Kogarah lock-up, and thence to the Reception House.

Sydney Morning Herald, 3 March, 1908

Our Collectibles Fair Lydham Hall Sunday 20th September



Big excitement this day.
Bring your friends and family. Hundreds of collectible items displayed for sale at beautiful Lydham Hall.



Guest Speakers Coming Up



JULY 18TH Society AGM- no speaker- "Show and Tell" - bring along an interesting object or photograph and tell us all about it.

AUGUST 15TH: Colin Beacroft, Canterbury and District Historical Society "Canterbury's Boys" - Colin from the Canterbury and District Historical Society tells how members researched over 1900 locals from the District who served in WWI. Hear stories of veterans and discover how modern research is adding to the story including the recent identification of two lost boys at Fromelles.

SEPTEMBER 19TH : Dr Garry Darby will speak on his new booklet: "*The Enigmatic Doll's Point Digger Memorial*". The talk will include a forum discussion with Judy Reynolds and descendants of the sculptor's family. This will be followed by a short walk (50m) to inspect the site where the 'Digger' once stood near the corner of Clareville Av and Russell Av. Please come along and help to make this special event, with some direct contact with local history, a big success.

NOVEMBER 21st: Gillian Lewis, Australian Maritime Museum : " HMAS Sydney and the Kormoran"

Please come along to our meetings and enjoy the history presented by our speakers. All visitors welcome

CARLTON RAILWAY STATION

The 'Propeller' October 11, 1934.

"Even before the railway was opened the Hurstville residents along Webber's Road, now English Street, and west thereof, agitated for the establishment of a station at Carlton; but no heed was paid by the Public Works Department and, by the Railway Commissioners until 1888, the objection to the proposed site being to its propinquity to Kogarah Station. Ultimately, the Department agreed to the erection of the station, but only on condition that the necessary land be given free, pounds 400 be paid in cash, and 60 first-class yearly season tickets to Sydney be taken out. This was agreed to and the station opened in 1889. A luncheon to celebrate the event was held in the waiting-room. Mr Sale, Chief Railway Audit Inspector, presided."

Do You know about the Dictionary of Sydney?

The Dictionary of Sydney is like no other city encyclopaedia in the world. It has become a great research tool for all interested in the history of our city.

Based on a permanent historical digital repository, the Dictionary of Sydney aims to gather resources on every aspect of human habitation in the greater Sydney area from the first arrival of people to the present.

Launched in November 2009, the main website at www.dictionaryofsydney.org is just the first of several windows into the historical digital repository that we are building. The Dictionary website is a forum for public discussion and controversy, an aide to teaching and learning, and a source of information and entertainment.

What's in the Dictionary ?

It contains:

- thematic essays from noted experts
- interesting pieces on well known and unlikely topics
- entries on people, events, organisations, buildings, artefacts and places
- stories and images from our readers and volunteers
- oral histories, photographs and artistic representations
- material about important documents and artefacts
- sound and moving images.

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All of these are richly contextualised and mapped in space and time, connecting to and through each other to form the overall picture. See our series of blog posts Finding your way through the Dictionary for a guide to exploring the features of the Dictionary of Sydney.

The most recent addition to the dictionary is the First Fleet Project - a comprehensive and detailed survey of that subject. You will also find similar projects dealing with Cook's River and George's River, Aboriginal Heritage amongst a host of others.

Book Review

THE REEF: A PASSIONATE HISTORY BY IAIN MC CALMAN PUBLISHED 2013 BY VIKING 341 PAGES - Laurice Bondfield

The Great Barrier reef has been in the news lately for all the wrong reasons: probable pollution from harbour building for the new mines in Queensland, agricultural runoff, coral bleaching because of climate change and possible damage from large container vessels sailing to and from the new harbours. Iain MacCalman's timely book traces human reaction to the Reef: from terror at the prospect of shipwreck there to a growing realisation by visitors and scientists alike of its beauty and stunning variety of life. This is a social, cultural and environmental history of one of Australia's most treasured landmarks and a great read to boot!

The first historic encounter with the reef- one we all know of is Captain Cook's ship "Endeavour" smashing part of its hull on a coral reef in 1770. The author's interest in the Great Barrier Reef was aroused when he participated in a 2001 reenactment of Cook's voyage in a replica "Endeavour" for a TV documentary being made for the Discovery Channel. He gives an amusing account of his voyage- the historians seem to have been an afterthought, tucked away in a small space usually reserved for spare sail bags!. Unlike the astronomers or botanists, they were expected, along with the Aboriginal advisors, to work as able seaman until needed for historical presentation to camera. The introduction is well worth reading for the stories of his voyage, how he fell under the spell of the vast wild extent of the Reef and became intent on finding out more about people's reaction to the Reef over time.

The book is divided into three sections: Part One-Terror, Part Two-Nurture,Part Three-Wonder.

The terror begins with a description of Cook's voyage to almost disaster. He brings home how frightening it must have been for captain and crew marooned on the far side of the world, totally reliant on their own skills to survive the holing of the ship by coral, to live off the land while repairing the damage and, that accomplished, to then navigate their way out of an unknown maze of reefs to the safety of the open sea. The next voyager to sail the Reef was Matthew Flinders. Iain Mc Calman pays tribute to his skill and daring in charting his way through the Reef on his circumnavigation of the continent. Then we come to the tale of Eliza Fraser and her ordeal on the Reef. The writer shows how one journalist from the "Times" wove together several elements of "shipwreck narratives" to produce an enthralling story, not necessarily a true account of what happened to her. Tragically this story labelled the Aboriginal people as cannibals which affected the way they were subsequently treated.

By 1842 there had been so many shipwrecks on the northern Reef and through the Torres Strait that the Admiralty sent the schooner "Fly" to survey the area. On board was a geologist John Jukes charged with investigating the geology of the reef and the structure, origins and behaviour of corals - the first scientist assigned to do so. As the Admiralty hydrographer noted to the captain of the "Fly" these underwater obstacles "lurk and even grow"! Jukes is an interesting character - not only a good scientist, but a political radical and very open minded in his approach to the people of the Torres Strait Islands. The writer notes that: "his scientific analysis of the geology of the Reef would remain unsurpassed in clarity, brilliance and originality until the early twentieth century." Jukes is one of the many interesting people to whom the author introduces us - all in different ways fascinated by the Reef.

In "Nurture" we meet first "The Ghost Maiden" Barbara Thompson. Surviving a shipwreck in 1844, she had been adopted by a man and woman of the Kaurareg people of Muralag Island. She was greeted as their daughter Giom come back as a ghost. Five years later she was taken aboard the "H.M.S. Rattlesnake", a survey vessel. It is due to Oswald Brierley,

the ship's artist, that we know so much of her life among the Kaurareg. Also on board was Thomas Huxley - Charles Darwin's champion. It was Brierley though, who tactfully managed the way that Barbara was returned to her parents in Sydney and the story of her five years on Muralag, where she may have had a child with one of the Kaurareg men, was hardly mentioned in the newspapers. Given the prejudices of the time, this was the best outcome for Barbara but her good treatment thus never supplanted the idea of the "cannibal blacks". Two other shipwrecked sailors- an Englishman James Morrill and a Frenchman Narcisse Pelletier were also taken in by Aboriginal people of the Queensland coast and lived with them for periods of time. On returning to their home countries they gave factual accounts of their experiences. Their life among the "savages" seems to have influenced them for life; both were well treated and became part of the tribes they lived with, never, on returning to "civilisation," to really settle to their former lives-Morrill, in fact, became a kind of recluse. Unfortunately these favourable accounts were never given widespread publicity either and were taken up and distorted into a serial of the "sailor shipwrecked amongst cannibal tribes" type as his own adventures by a con man Louis de Rougement in 1898 in Wide World Magazine, which did spread widely.

Another surprising visitor to the Reef was William Kent. Anyone who has read the book "The Suspicions of Mr Whicher or the Murder at Roadhill House" by K. Summerscale will have an idea of why he might want to escape from England. He and his sister were accused of the gruesome murder of their 3 year old half -brother. William's sister, Constance eventually confessed to the murder and was gaoled for twenty years, although the shrewd Inspector Whicher suspected it was a joint enterprise. While his sister languished in prison, William, a talented artist, gained an education with a particular interest in marine biology, especially corals. Thomas Huxley again appears as one of his lecturers and mentors. Ultimately William Saville -Kent as he was known, produced a beautifully illustrated book on the corals and fish of the Reef, which influenced many subsequent scientific explorers of the Reef. Finally we meet Ted Banfield ,writer of "Confessions of a Beachcomber" and his life on Dunk Island. Extracts from his book were often published in school magazines and essay collections so his name may thus be familiar to our senior readers. His life on the island made him one of the first to consider the conservation of some of the Reef's wildlife.

Finally in "Wonder" we begin to meet the scientists enthralled by the variety and mystery of the life of the Reef. First came American natural scientist/zoologist Alex Agassiz on a quixotic quest in 1896, aged 61, to disprove Charles Darwin's theory on the formation of coral reefs. As Iain Mac Calman says, " the Great Barrier Reef, which, having experienced varied shades of fame and infamy was catapulted by Agassiz quest, to global scientific prominence" . We then spend some time with the 1927 expedition of Cambridge scientists , studying the Reef at the Low Isles off Cairns. Already the Reef seemed imperilled, one expert opining when the expedition was being set up, "It is the greatest pity in the world that there is a great Barrier Reef. Its existence is really a tragedy so far as the people of Queensland are concerned. It is a great nuisance to navigation. It is also a curse because it destroys 70,000 or 80,000 square miles of admirable trawling ground" Luckily not everyone agreed with this stringent criticism and the expedition produced seven large volumes of research published between 1930 and 1968 as well as numerous articles in scientific journals. This expedition was also notable for the number of young women scientists on its staff, who proved an inspiration to young women scientists all over the world. Next, we meet the three eco warriors - poet Judith Wright, John Busst president of the Innisfail branch of the Queensland Wildlife Preservation Society and an ecologist Len Webb who, with meagre resources, opposed the mining of Ellison Reef and started the journey to protection and current World Heritage status. Do you remember "Save the Reef" stickers for cars? They pioneered the use of this form of publicity in Australia.

Our final encounter is with scientist Charlie Veron in 2009 being introduced to a meeting of the Royal Society in London by Sir David Attenborough. The story of what he did

and how he came to be there, the depressing reality of what he had to say, I will leave you to find out by reading this wonderful book.

Bexley Gully

Fred Scott

The Society's web site (www.stgeorgehistsoc.org.au) has attracted quite a bit of correspondence and a number of queries in the short time it has been in operation. One query in particular is very intriguing, and it is hoped that someone may be able to throw some light on it.

Aerial photographs of Sydney taken in 1943 are available on the internet at maps.six.nsw.gov.au and one taken of the Bardwell Valley (known locally as Bexley Gully) near Bexley Road depicts an area at the end of the northern part of Orpington Street for which an explanation is sought. It appears to consist of a number of man-made objects which, because of the time period, could have some military connection.

The originator of this query played in this area of the gully as a child in the early 1960s and there was no evidence of anything other than trees and scrub at that time. He also doesn't recall any mention of this area by local long-term residents.

Another long-time resident remembers being taken for walks by her mother along the walking track near this area some time between 1939 and 1941 and did not notice anything unusual.

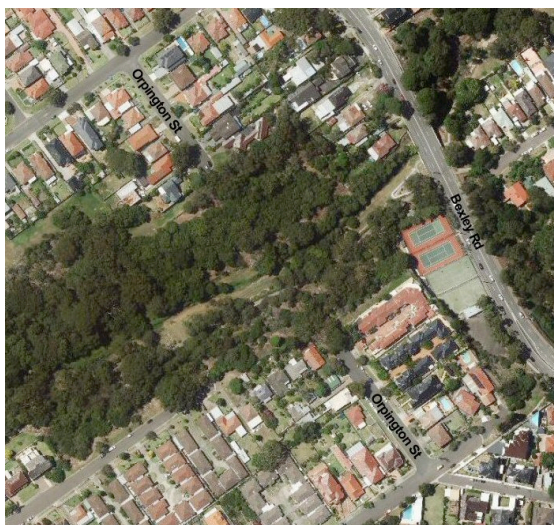
Another resident who grew up in Bexley North in the same area had a father who was an air raid warden. He said there was an anti aircraft gun installed at the tennis courts either late 1941 or early 1942, manned by army reservists. It did not require concrete footings etc and the area was returned to normal use by 1944. There was also a searchlight somewhere around the current location of the Bexley Bowling Club (at Bexley North). The two groups communicated on the AM radio band, unfortunately on the same frequency as a popular commercial radio station - so much for secrecy!

The only clue in the book "The Bardwell Valley" (by Ron Rathbone) is mention of the Volunteer Defence Force (our version of Dad's Army?) carrying out exercises in Bardwell Valley, so perhaps that is the connection. The

Rockdale Local Studies Library cannot find any mention of this particular area in Council Minutes. Any contribution by a reader would be appreciated.



Bardwell Valley 1943



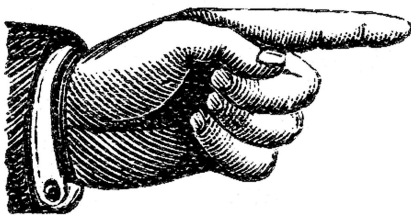
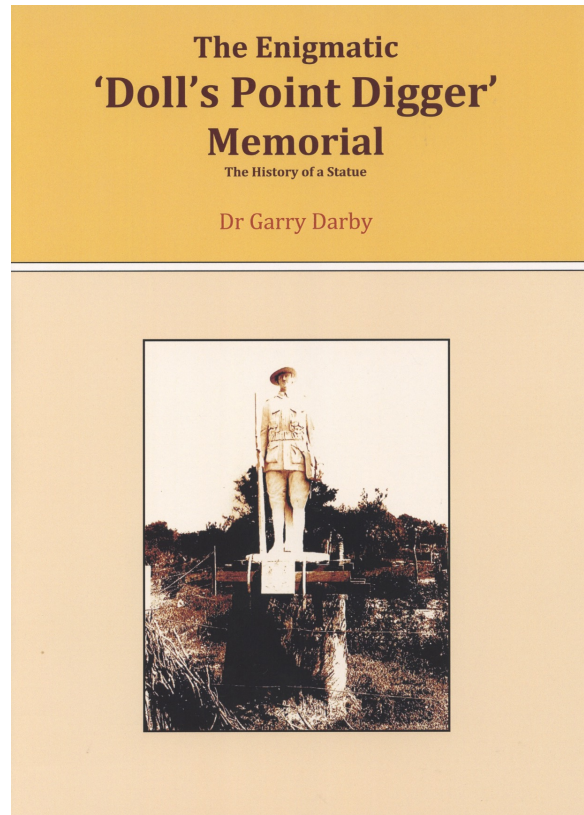
Bardwell Valley 2015

*St George Historical Society Member Publications***MYSTERY SOLVED - DOLLS POINT DIGGER MEMORIAL
NEW BOOKLET**

This new booklet relates the history of the private, World War One, Memorial statue that was publicly displayed near the corner of Clareville Avenue and Russell Avenue, Doll's Point, from 1920 to the mid 1950s. Made by a local stonemason, the statue stood on private land for much of that time. The story of its 'life' and beginning is fascinating and will rouse memories for many long-time Sans Souci residents. For the younger generation it will point them in the direction of some important local history which gives a glimpse of the past.

Booklet available now from Garry Darby direct (\$10 + postage \$2.50) ph 9583-9916 or at Century 21 "Bayside" Real Estate,, 26 Clareville Av., Doll's Point.

Garry Darby will present a talk, forum and short walk about this publication at the September meeting (19th Sept at 2pm)



From the "St George Call", Saturday 14 July 1914. p4.

This piece is typical of the type of historical information that is now available to us all - free - on Trove.

ROCKDALE RIFLE CLUB.

The establishment of the Rockdale Rifle Club has been gazetted. At a general meeting on Friday the new members had the oath administered by the Mayor of Bexley (Alderman J (G Griffin) Officers were elected as follow - Captain, Mr W T Tickle, treasurer, Mr W Paine, hon secretary, Mr A J Marshall, committee, Messrs Court, Chonpin, Talbot, and Leber.

SMH, 27.7.1909