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## ST GEORGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER | **MAY 2023**



### **WELCOME**

It's hard to imagine that such an asset such a Trove, with over 14 billion digital items taken from the collections of Australian libraries, universities, museums, galleries and archives, was so close to folding last month. Fortunately it has been saved with a commitment from the Albanese Government to provide it with \$33m over the next 4 years. If you have never used Trove before, we have a link below to get you started. We suggest that before you start, you get comfortable with some snacks because once you start, it's hard to stop looking.

We found on Trove a great article on the history of the Sans Souci Hotel which was demolished in the 1920's.

*The Editorial Team.*

### **WHAT'S ON**

#### **"Godmother of the Harbour Bridge"**

**Saturday 20 May 2023** | 2pm to 4pm |  
Rockdale Library, Level 3.

Our guest speaker this month is Bill Phippen. In 2019, a Sydney Metro Tunnel Boring Machine was named Kathleen, yet few people would know of Kathleen Muriel Butler, Confidential Secretary to John Bradfield. In the 1920s, she played a vital role in the bridge construction both in Sydney and in London where she was sent to represent Bradfield and the NSW government in their dealings with Dorman Long and Co, the British contractors for the work. The talk will be followed by a meeting of the St George Historical Society. Open to all members and the general public. Free. Gold coin donation welcome.

[LINK TO TROVE](#)

[SEE WHAT ELSE IS ON](#)

## DEMOLISHED: GONE FOREVER

*Sadly, the St George area has lost many important and significant buildings over the last 100 years and, without state protection, we continue to lose more each year. Over the following pages, we bring you a selection of images of buildings that no longer exist and an article from 1921 about the demolition of the San Souci Hotel which, had it remained, would have been one of the oldest buildings in the district and one of the few convict built.*

### THE SANS SOUCI HOTEL

*The Sans Souci Hotel, built in the 1830's and originally called Rocky Point House, was demolished in the early 1900's. The information below is reproduced from an article titled 'Historic Landmark', from local newspaper, The St George Call, 6 May 1921. The author was simply called "Gorrick".*

*"The demolition of the old Sans Souci hotel has removed from the St. George district a very old landmark.*

*It was built by Mr. Cooper over one hundred and four years ago, during the regime of Governor Major-General Lachan Macquarie, by State Labor. The stone was in the vicinity and the timber used in its construction was taken from the trees grown nearby, and hand sawn, for saw-mills were not then available, and at the time of demolition each were in good state of preservation.*

*In the stone walls and stout beams were quaint "hide-holes" in unexpected places, and a steep stair-case ascending abruptly from what was the living room. By the way, a story is attached to that same staircase.*

*In the old days when convicts still lived in the scrub on the edge of the bay and the officer in charge dwelt in the stone house on the hill, a "step staircase" existed, which was drawn up religiously each night as a means of security against any marauder; but even in those days a determined cracks man would have found some means of attaining his desire in spite of this precaution.*

*river. The men working on the job were supplied with water by a lad on horseback, which was taken from a creek in the vicinity.*

*Originally a round tower-like building, the old house was improved by several additional rooms and a verandah, but otherwise it remained as it was when first erected; and it is this house, with its memories and associations that has been threatened and demolished at the hands of that juggernaut, "Progress."*

*Such places should not be permitted to become the plaything of departments, but should be preserved as national property, and valued accordingly.*

*In the old days, however, the vessels waited on the far side of the bay for the Customs officer to come aboard and inspect their clearance papers, with what trepidation we can only guess at in these prosaic days. The old Customs-house, as it is called, is picturesque from the outside, but infinitely more so inside.*

*Coming to the different occupants we have it from some of the Pioneers of the district that during, the late fifties it was occupied by one Mr. Marmaduke Constable, a wealthy Englishman, who took special pride in breeding prize pigs, and it is said that on several occasions he would have "pig troughs" filled with good old English brew, which he used to import, and have a race amongst the pigs for first in. His guests included all the notable personages of that period, including Governor Denison, Wentworth and others who loved the week's shooting party.*

*In the early sixties we find Mr. Cowsley, a contractor and race horse owner in possession. He had the contract for making the approaches to Tom Ugly's Point, on both sides of the*

*This proved a great attraction. A horse named "Lord Arwell," owned by a local resident, was a good goer, and afterwards won the Sydney Cup. "Hambleton Hill," was also a favourite,*

*During this time the first punt arrived from Sydney. It was built by Messrs. Heiley & Harper, and was worked by a man named Harris, with the aid of a three inch coir rope, and plenty of "Scotch" navigation. Any person wishing to cross the river before the punt was installed, would plunge their horses off a large shelving rock right at this point.*

*It was called the Horse Rock, and old residents should remember this spot. Mr. Cowsley was the owner of two well-known race horses, "Blue Bonnett" and "Chatterbox," the former won a race at Randwick. He also had a line orchard and garden and some of the "Old Boys" can tell a tale about his mulberry trees.*

*The first to get a Hotel License was Mr. Dettman, it was some time before he was known and did not remain long. He was succeeded by Mr. Rust, and from all accounts he was a great sports man. He introduced boat racing on the river in cutters and deep keel boats. He also erected the first wharf between Sandringham and Sans Souci. He also introduced the first steamers from Sydney, to land the holiday makers at Sans Souci. They were paddle wheel steamers at that time. He catered well for holiday folks and large crowds drove out from Sydney.*

*It is said that one steamer came out so heavily packed with passengers that the engine refused to go astern, with the result that the wharf was carried away, but not to be disappointed, several swam ashore.*

*Mr. Baker was next, and carried on the sailing and other sports. Then followed Mr. Dobson, and he introduced horse racing, there being plenty of vacant land and a course was cleared.*

*but a pony named "Kossock," owned locally, was hard to beat, also a horse named "Dick" was the best over the "sticks." It is said that Mr. Dobson was the first white man to swim across the river. He swam from Rocky Point to Cummins Point. Mr. John Emmerson was next. He was a fishmonger in Sydney at the same time. He encouraged foot racing and oyster eating parties. The competitors consisted of a fair number of local residents some of whom are on top yet.*

*During the last thirty-five years, Mr. John Frater has been the licensee and he is well-known to the present generation. He was the first to introduce pigeon shooting matches, and some crack shots have won fame in this district, and with the advent of the tram and the Saturday half-holiday, the crowd of cricketers and football teams have greatly increased.*

*Mr. Frater was the first to go out under the new Licensing Act, although it is said he was one of the smartest men behind the bar. It was at this period of time that Rocky Point-road was pegged out and cleared, prior to this it is recorded that the Governor asked Mr. Cooper, one day in Sydney, why he did not attend church on Sundays, Mr. Cooper replied that he was without a defined road. The church in question was the old church in Tempe, the road from Sydney finished at Cook's River Road, as a result of that interview The Governor allowed Mr. Cooper sufficient State labor to clear the road to Sans Souci, owing to the peculiar formation of the rocks along the water front, it was named Rocky Point Road.*

*There are some fine pine trees on the Estate, several being 36 inch in diameter with a height of between seventy and eighty feet."*

## **DEMOLISHED HOUSES OF THE ST GEORGE DISTRICT**

### **MONOMEETH ST, BEXLEY**

'Lorna Doone' was the home of William Shepherd, a local draughtsman. The house was demolished in the 1970's.

### **WOLLONGONG ROAD, ARNCLIFFE**

This is 'Athelstane', home of Alderman William Judd, which was demolished to make way for Athelstane Public School.

## FLEET ST, CARLTON

This magnificent house stood on the corner of Durham and Fleet Streets and now has a 1970s house on the site.

## EDEN STREET, ARNCLIFFE

Photo taken in the 1960's. House, as well as the entire street, is now replaced with units.

## FIRTH STREET, ARNCLIFFE

'Glenevie' was demolished in the 1980's and replaced with units. The fence is still standing.

## PRINCES HIGHWAY, ROCKDALE

'Rosedale Villa' was the home of the Iliffe family who ran a large nursery. Demolished in the 1970's.

*All images shown above sourced from Bayside Libraries. Click [here](#) to be taken there.*

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### St George Historical Society Incorporated

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