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



### **WELCOME**

A belated newsletter. But as the saying goes, better late than never!

Thank you to everyone that has renewed their membership for this financial year. Membership is the lifeblood for any organisation such as ours and, like many other historical groups, covid took its toll and we lost nearly half of our membership from 2020 to 2022. And we are still significantly down. Please refer the Society to family and friends - we would love to have more members.

The painting above is probably one of the most important objects in our collection. Read more about it in our update on Lydham Hall on the following pages.

*The Editorial Team.*



### **WHAT'S ON**

#### **"Message in a Bottle"**

**Saturday 21 Oct 2023** | 2pm to 4pm |  
Rockdale Library, Level 3.

#### **Guest Speaker: Anne Field**

In March 1912, Agnes Gibson set sail for Sydney on a journey that would change her life. She kept a detailed log of her voyage, which was passed on to her descendants. One hundred years later, her grand-daughter, Anne Field, put a story about her life into a bottle and committed it to the Southern Ocean. Hear Anne tell a story of adventure, which honours the bravery of our early British immigrants.

Open to all members and the general public. Free. Gold coin donation welcome.

[MEMBERSHIP LINK](#)

[SEE WHAT ELSE IS ON](#)



## *Members Christmas Afternoon Tea*

**Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> November**, 2pm – 4pm at Lydham Hall, 18 Lydham Avenue, Rockdale

Join us for an afternoon on the back verandah of Lydham Hall. This will be the first time the Christmas afternoon tea is back at the museum since 2018! All members are welcome to come, enjoy a tea or coffee and some nibbles and have a sneak preview of the progress made towards opening the house to the public again. RSVPs essential for catering purposes.

RSVP for CHRISTMAS AFTERNOON TEA

### **LYDHAM HALL HISTORIC HOUSE AND MUSEUM | UPDATE**

It has been a very busy 6 weeks since we received the keys to Lydham Hall and the amazing team of volunteers have been working very hard to achieve as much as possible in a very short amount of time.

Despite a 3 month delay in finalising the License Agreement, coupled with delays in gaining access to the museum, we had hoped we could partly open the museum in October. Alas we have realised this target date was too optimistic.

Instead, the Society Executive has decided that it would be preferable to present the museum as finished as possible, with all rooms open and completed. As such the reopening has been postponed to February 2024 - a date chosen because it marks the anniversary of the museums opening in February 1971.

In the meantime, cleaning and setting up the displays continues. As at the time of writing, most of the downstairs rooms have been cleaned and we are started to place furniture inside the rooms. This has meant lots of waxing and polishing. Easy work for domestic servants from days gone by but hard work for modern muscles. Next step is making the rooms looked lived in - Victorian style!

We have also set up our new local history room and will soon commence the final room - the old 1917 kitchen. Outside, windows and shutters have been washed and we have started painting the garden furniture.

See some update photos on following pages.





*The Drawing Room is looking clean and smelling fresh.*



*A wall of the Drawing Room showing a lovely painting by Ellen Davis.*



*This little painting is probably one of the most important pieces in our collection. It is a painting done by Ellen Davis, wife of Joseph Davis - the man who built Lydham Hall in the late 1800's. The painting is of a French rural scene painted in 1887 by Ellen as a gift to her son. It now takes pride of place on the wall in the Drawing Room. Sadly the painting and the frame is in need of conservation and the Society will be looking at raising funds to achieve this.*





*Thanks to our Treasurer, Barry, the Local History Room is set up with a new desk, chair and two new modern display cases. This room will hold a permanent exhibition about the St George district with information panels on the walls and objects of local significance. A good example of an object of local significance is the small chair in the corner of this room. It was the first Mayoral chair, used by Mayor James Beehag on the 13th January 1871 when he was elected the first Mayor of the newly formed West Botany Municipality (later renamed the Municipality of Rockdale on the 17th May 1888). The museum is extremely lucky to have had this chair donated by local man, Mr Edward Fripp, in 1992.*

## **A BIG THANK YOU TO OUR VOLUNTEERS**

Our volunteers have worked tirelessly to get Lydham Hall back into shape and they all deserve special mention. Volunteering at the museum is rewarding and fun work and we have enjoyed some great lunchtime discussions sitting on the back verandah. Thank you Barry, Bob (Jansen), Bob (Horton), Diana, Laurel, Laurice, Margaret, Ray, Reg, Ross and Tina!

But we do need more volunteers, particularly when the museum re-opens in February. If you can help, please contact Tina or Laurice. No experience or expertise required. Nor is a regular commitment required.

PLEASE REACH OUT HERE TO VOLUNTEER



## WOODFORD ACADEMY, WOODFORD NSW

Last month I visited Woodford Academy in the Blue Mountains to see their latest exhibition on botanical art. Woodford Academy started life as an inn before being turned into a house, a boarding house and finally an exclusive school. Donated to the National Trust in 1979, it is open every 3rd Saturday & run solely by volunteers who do a terrific job at maintaining this large property.

[CLICK HERE FOR MORE INFORMATION](#)



*The 1860s section of the house is eerily similar to Lydham Hall.*



*Well worn sandstone flagstone step down into a colonial garden.*





*Very simple interiors show the functions of the room well.*



*Death defying stairs! At least we have a handrail at Lydham Hall!*



*1860's kitchen with huge fireplace .*





*Displays beautifully presented within the rooms. Love that wall colour!*



*More great colour (see original underneath). Botanica art on the walls.*



*Some great ideas here for Lydham Hall merchandise.*



*The visit finished, as usual, with scones!*



## CONGRATULATIONS TO JOAN & GEOFF RANKIN

Well done to Joan and Geoff Rankin who were presented with an award at the Bayside Council meeting on the 27th September. Joan and Geoff have been dedicated volunteers at Lydham Hall for a number of decades and were instrumental in keeping the museum open every Sunday pre-Covid. A well deserved award for their dedication.

[LINK TO ARTICLE IN THE LEADER](#)

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### St George Historical Society Incorporated

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