



THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

S E P T E M B E R

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THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Sponsored by Kogarah Municipal Council)

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OBJECTIVES: To promote interest in the history of Kogarah Municipality and Australia in general.

To give support to the preservation of historic buildings and other objects considered to be of historic value.

MEMBERSHIP: Any enquiries regarding membership should be directed to the Hon. Secretary. Visitors are especially welcome.

Subscription: \$1.00 per annum (plus 50c joining fee)

Senior Citizens: .25c per annum

Students: .25c per annum

MEETINGS: Meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month, commencing at 8 p.m., in The Exhibition Lounge, at the Civic Centre, Belgrave Street, Kogarah. (Take lift to second floor and turn to the right).

CARSS' COTTAGE MUSEUM: Open Sundays and Public Holidays from Noon to 5 p.m.
Admission 20c Adults, 10c Children (Maximum 60c for one family).

DONATIONS FOR MUSEUM: Donations of items of historical interest suitable for inclusion in the Society's Museum will be gratefully received by the Museum Convener:

Miss C. McEwen,
84 Carlton Parade,
CARLTON. 2218.

'Phone 587 2090.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEWSLETTER: Contributions of articles and information of local interest for publication in this Newsletter will be welcomed by the Publications Convener:

Mr. V. S. Smith,
26 Prince Edward Street,
CARLTON. 2218.

'Phone 527 2938.

OUR AUGUST MEETING. Those who attended our August Meeting were rewarded with a most absorbing address by Mr. Don Sinclair on the subject "Gilbert and Sullivan". "You could have heard a pin drop" said one enthusiastic member - and that is why I'm going to the Hurstville Historical Society's Meeting at 8 p.m. on Monday, 10th September. Mr. Sinclair will again present his talk and the Hurstville Society will be pleased to welcome any of our members who missed our meeting.

OUR SEPTEMBER MEETING will be held at 8 p.m. on September 13, in the Exhibition Lounge on the second floor of the Civic Centre. Our Speaker will be Miss Peek, a member of the Canterbury & District Historical Society, who will give us an illustrated talk on "Old Canterbury".

The Competition Prize for this Meeting has been donated by Mrs. Kingston.

The ladies on Supper Roster at this meeting will be Mrs. Lawson and Mrs. Boland.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT.

On the 18th August last we were hosts to members of the Women's Committee of the National Trust of Australia. During the day about 150 ladies visited Carss' Cottage and were unanimous in their praise of the work that had been done by our Society's members.

Reproduced elsewhere in this Newsletter is the letter we received from Mrs. Jackaman, Vice President of the National Trust, in appreciation of our assistance. As a memento of the occasion a pewter paperweight engraved with the National Trust emblem and the Carss' Cottage visit was donated to the Society and will be displayed at the Museum.

The Museum has never looked as attractive as it does at the moment. Our Museum Committee has really worked wonders with the displays, particularly in the front room, with an outstanding dining setting, and the kitchen with all its crockery and utensils.

The Potters Group and Art Society have also contributed to the overall effect by their fine displays of pottery and paintings.

Carss' Cottage is now a feature of the Kogarah scene and a most rewarding place to take yourselves and your visitors. We look forward to seeing you there in the near future.

J. E. Veness.

AN INVITATION FROM COBBITTY.

The Camden Red Cross is holding a "Cobbitty Day" on Saturday, 27th October. "Denbeigh" is an historic home built in 1817 by the Rev. Thomas Hassell.

(Children under 12 are not admitted). "Matavia" garden won last years Garden Competition. Then there's old St. Paul's Cobbitty Church and graveyard and Heber Chapel. Light refreshments are available and there will be an Art Show by the Camden Art Group. Tickets are available at \$1.50 each from Mrs. H. Humphries, "Bosworth", Cobbitty, 2570.

MUSEUM REPORT.

Further advancements have been made during the last month at the Museum; a Victorian parlor scene has been set up, and also a display on the history of the St. George Motor Boat Club.

Mrs. S. Anderson, whose husband was a foundation member of the St. George Motor Boat Club, has lent to the Society a number of photographs. A display has been set up using these photographs and information obtained from the club on its history.

A Victorian parlor scene has been arranged consisting of the table that William Carss made set up for afternoon tea, our model, and the organ. We received many admiring comments from the National Trust visitors on this display.

Mr. Veness in his President's Report has commented on the National Trust Visit but I would just like to compliment Mrs. Lean on her beautiful flower arrangements, which added greatly to the appearance of the displays. If anyone on Museum Roster would like to bring flowers on their day it would be appreciated as it does create a pleasing atmosphere.

Donations - Mr. Upton - set of colour paint samples for buggies.

<u>Museum Roster</u> -	2nd September	- Mr. & Mrs. Lean
	9th "	- Mrs. Taylor and Mrs. Johns
	16th "	- Mr. & Mrs. Smith
	23rd "	- Mr. & Mrs. Cavanough
	30th "	- Mr. K. Grievie and Mrs. James
	1st October (Monday)	Labour Day Holiday - Volunteers required.
	7th "	- Mr. & Mrs. Lean
	14th "	- Dr. and Mrs. Hatton
	21st "	- Mr. & Mrs. Gaskin

(If any date is not convenient please contact me as soon as possible -
'Phone 587-2090)

Colleen McEwen (Museum Convener)

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY.

We are accustomed to receiving favourable comments concerning Carss' Cottage but are always conscious of our relative inexperience when compared with other Societies which have been in existence for a much longer period. Members of the National Trust have vast experience, gained from viewing numerous old homes and museums, so we were grateful when this letter was received from Mrs. Jackaman, a Vice President, following a visit by about 150 ladies from the Trust ---

THE NATIONAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA (N.S.W)

19th August, 1973.

Dear Mr. Veness,

On behalf of the Women's Committee I write to thank the Kogarah Historical Society and yourself, as its President, for having allowed us to see over Carss' Cottage.

I would like to congratulate you on the wonderful job that has been done restoring the cottage and filling it with such interesting objects.

I have asked our Secretary to send a donation of \$25.00 to you and hope that it will be of some use to your Society.

Again with our thanks for having opened the cottage to our Members and with best wishes for its future success.

Yours sincerely,
C. JACKAMAN.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE REPORT.

What a busy time we have had!

July 28th was our morning at Roselands and I am sure all enjoyed the discussion and the delightful morning tea. We may not make very much at these functions but it is a pleasant break and we do get to know one another.

August 17th.-- This was our Street Stall at Kogarah and the weather was kind to us. Many thanks to the ladies who supported the stall and brought items for sale. The most popular sales were the cakes, we hardly had time to put them out for sale and they were gone.

Our takings for the day amounted to \$114.73, which was excellent considering that we did not have a great variety of goods and most of these were second-hand. My personal thanks to the ladies who helped stock the stall and to those who helped on the day. They are the same ones who always come forward and we enjoyed a pleasant friendly time together.

August 28th -- Our President's Cocktail Party. I am sure each and everyone who attended this function had an enjoyable evening. To Mr. Chris Kelly of Kelly's Cellar, Kogarah, we extend a very sincere thank you for the Wines supplied, also to the ladies of the Social Committee who were responsible for the very nice supper.

Whilst welcoming the guests the President introduced Miss Pam Hawken, Miss Joan Worrall and Mr. Kevin Sears - who will be conducting our Christmas Night Show on December 13th.

Most of the guests dressed for the occasion and looked very elegant. Mr. & Mrs. Dorney were outstanding in full period costume.

Our thanks to Mr. & Mrs. Bob Collins of Kogarah Bay who kindly donated three beautiful potted orchids. The lucky winners were Miss Colleen McEwen, Mrs. Esme Blue and Mr. Beavan, while Mrs. James celebrated her birthday by winning the gallon flask of wine.

To Gwen and Jack Lean must also go a special thank you -- to you Gwen for time given in supplying and decorating the cottage with flowers and to Jack for the appropriate taped music that really made us all feel a little nostalgic for the past.

After expenses the amount raised was \$36.70 which would not have been possible without the support of all who attended. Many thanks!

XMAS HAMPER. Please keep on sending in your ticket butts and money for the Christmas Hamper. More tickets are available.

SUNDAY - OCTOBER 14th - TULIP TOUR OF BOWRAH. Tour starts from the Civic Centre in Kogarah at 9 a.m. sharp. Morning tea at Camden (please bring your own cup) Tea and Coffee supplied -- Basket Lunch at King Ranch (weather permitting) -- return approximately 6 p.m. A second Coach has been booked - only a few seats are still available.

CHRISTMAS CARDS - Once again we have had some Carss' Cottage Christmas Cards printed. If you are interested in obtaining some of these will you please make enquiries at the Meeting. Don't miss out this year.

CHRISTMAS PARTY - THURSDAY - DECEMBER 13th -- Bookings now open.

Sylvia Kelly.

WHAT WERE THE WIRELESS WAVES SAYING - LONG, LONG AGO?

By V. S. Smith.

This year, 1973, marks the Golden Jubilee of Broadcasting in Australia, for it was on 13th November, 1923 that Sydney Broadcasters Limited commenced broadcasting from its primitive studio on the roof of Smith's Weekly building in Phillip Street, Sydney, under the call-sign 2SB (Sydney Broadcasters). Then, on 5th December, Farmer & Company, 2FC, started from the roof-garden of that firm's store. Because "2SB" and "2FC" sounded much alike (especially on 1923 wireless sets) the former station soon changed its call-sign to 2BL (Broadcasters Limited) to avoid confusion.

Five years before this Commencement of broadcasting, in the year 1918, I became a "wireless crank" as, later, many people quite seriously called us. But at that time there were so few of us that we were unnoticed by the general public and it was only those living nearby who saw the wireless masts that thought we were a bit queer! I was eventually given my experimenter's licence with the call-sign 2Pi.

In 1918 my home was in what we now know as Barton Street, Kogarah. It had originally been called Moore Street, then altered to Herrmann Street. At the time of which I write it had recently been changed again, and during this period was known as Villa Street. A younger companion and I spent much time swimming at Lady Robinson's Beach and while sunbaking had long discussions about wireless and drew complicated diagrams in the sand. When I now remember our extremely limited knowledge of the subject at that time, I wonder what we could have said. For us, the subject was so interesting that we decided to build a crystal set.

First of all, we knew that a reasonably high aerial was required, so we selected a forty-foot high swamp-oak from what we now know as Scarborough Park but which at that time everybody called "the swamp" and comprised a scrub-covered waste area where sometimes bush-fires raged in the summer (during which snakes were frequent visitors to our backyards) and was always a swamp in the winter. The canal had not yet been constructed and the water spread over a wide area. Many people fished for eels from the road-bridge.

The wireless "mast" was successfully erected in my friend's backyard and many days were spent in the winding of coils and construction of the crystal set. As I think of the quantity of wire used in those coils, the name "wireless" seems to have been quite inappropriate.

My friend was still attending school so his funds were too low to enable him to purchase headphones, but fortunately I was earning real money (one pound twelve shillings and sixpence per week, to be exact) so I secured the 'phones. Their cost was the only item of expense, for everything else (except the sixpenny piece of galena crystal) was home-made.

Then came a nerve-wracking, nail-biting period of tension. The crystal set was finished to the last dab of shellac and the great experiment was about to begin as soon as my friend's Mother finished the washing-up. My friend and I very fittingly wore dignified, unsmiling expressions of deep concentration, very appropriate, we thought, for this solemn occasion. My friend's parents looked on with what we hoped was deep respect. We knew that they were quite ignorant about wireless, but treated them kindly in the hope that they would not feel too inferior in our presence. We graciously decided that we would permit them to hear some of the more-important stations which we were about to tune-in.

At length, my friend's Mother dried the final item, Father's Moustache-cup, and carefully hung it on a hook in the dresser. My friend and I now twisted the headphones so that each of us could use one ear-piece, and placed a hand over the other ear. There was a deep silence. My friend's Mother asked, in a whisper, if she could breathe now, and upon being given permission, very quietly got up and opened wide the

windows, quite seriously thinking that this would enable the signals to enter more easily. Suddenly, we both heard something! Removing the headphones to say "what was that"? we found it to be only the "puff,puff" of a steam-train climbing Fitzgerald's Hill.

Even with both windows open wide, we heard nothing at all on that first night which, although classified by us as a catastrophe, should not have been surprising. First of all, we didn't know what to expect as neither of us had ever heard a wireless signal - nor knew anyone who had! The "detector" was a piece of galena crystal on which a stiff fine wire (called a "cats whisker") had to be manipulated until a "sensitive" spot was found. But one only knew when such a spot had been found by hearing a signal - and there were fairly long intervals (perhaps lasting 10 minutes or more) when there were no signals to be heard. Dots and dashes from shore - or ship-stations on the 600 metre wave length were all that could be expected -- and we didn't know what position of switch, slider and coils would tune to 600 metres. Nevertheless we were greatly dejected and couldn't look my friend's parents in the eye. I slunk home in the depths of despair.

The following night, my friend's Mother did not even open a window. She pretended to be mending a red flannel nightshirt and seemingly paid no attention to our highly technical problems with the catswhisker.

We again twisted the headphones so that each of us could use one earpiece, and anxiously listened. And there, as clear as a bell, was the sound of morse code! Quite accidentally, the catswhisker, slide, switch and coils must have been just right when some obliging ship's operator commenced to transmit in beautiful morse code. What, you may ask, is "beautiful morse code"? Unless you heard it on your very own wireless set, made with your own hands in 1918, you'll never know! Our joy was beyond bounds and my friend's parents had to forceably remove the headphones so that they, too, might experience the thrill. In the excitement the red flannel nightshirt was heedlessly trampled underfoot and I sped home to get my Mother.

It is now difficult to convey to people who did not experience those early days of wireless the real thrill which came from hearing signals for the first time -- and the difficulty we had in explaining to our friends that we had done so. We were often met with disbelief. Wireless was not "in the news" and almost nobody would have then believed that in a few short years broadcasting would enter their homes.

I immediately decided that I would build my own set. In those days of crystal sets, the higher the aerial the louder would be the signals and the range of the set was also greatly extended. So I purchased two lengths of oregon -- 40 feet of 4" x 4" and 33 feet of 3" x 3". With an overlap of 3 feet, I thus had a 70 feet high mast -- which was the tallest in the district for many years. While it was being prepared and painted I attached my aerial to an iron roof and managed to get some signals.

The set I decided to make was a "loose-coupler" and on a panel at the front I fixed two pairs of telephone terminals (so that my mother and I could both use a pair of headphones) and three crystal-cups and catswhiskers with a select or-switch. If there was only one crystal it was impossible to know whether a period of silence meant that no station was transmitting or the catswhisker was not on a sensitive spot. But if there was more than one, each could be tried by moving the selector-switch and it was safe to tinker with one to try for a more sensitive spot.

It was during the building of my set that a strange and puzzling incident occurred. The set was partly dismantled when I thought I heard a sound in the headphones. Placing them to my ears, I was amazed to clearly hear a human voice. Hitherto, my friend and I had heard nothing but morse code. I soon discovered this voice to be one-side of a telephone conversation -- and the subject of the conversation was myself! At that time I had booked the School of Arts for a dance and the caretaker double-booked it to somebody else. And the telephone conversation I would over-hear was describing this incident.

I easily recognised the voice as that of the wife of Alderman George Barton, later Mayor of Rockdale (and then largely responsible for the construction of Scarborough Park canal) who lived about 150 yards down the street. I went to her home and she naturally found it hard to believe that I had overheard her conversation on my wireless. I learnt that although she could hear her telephone friend clearly, she had difficulty in making herself heard. I investigated and found that one of her telephone wires had come adrift from an insulator on a pole across the street from my home and was touching a lightning conductor which, of course, went to earth. Apparently the woman's voice thus leaked to earth, perhaps near a water-pipe, and then travelled via such pipe across the street to my home where my radio was earthed to the pipe. This sounds improbably (if not impossible!) but we were not connected to the telephone and nobody I have told about the incident has been able to suggest a better explanation.

In later years, on the way to Sydney, we would search from train windows for wireless masts. (In those times elevated outside aerials were essential). Counting our own two, the total number seen on the trip was five. In 1921 we spotted a new mast at Arncliffe and at the weekend we set out to find it. We confidently went to the house rang the bell, and upon the door being opened simply said "We see you have wireless!" And this total stranger eagerly invited us in and for a couple of hours we compared notes with someone whose name we didn't even know.

As time passed, a few amateur transmitters were heard using telephony instead of morse code. The commonly-heard question was "How's my modulation?" -- the voice often being almost indistinguishable owing to extreme distortion. But there always seemed to be another amateur ready to give the untruthful assurance "You're coming in fine, old man. I can hear you with the 'phones on the table".

But messages in dots and dashes still comprised 90% and what we could hear and it had earlier been necessary for me to learn the morse code in order to identify the stations heard. So I had bought a morse-key, buzzer and battery and friends in the bank obligingly tapped out messages until, with constant practice, I could read morse code at the rate of twenty words per minute. Then, with the aid of a book of call-signs, somewhat resembling a telephone directory, with the names of shore - and ship-stations and their call-signs, I could identify stations heard and sometimes read the messages.

Broome, Perth, Adelaide, Hobart, Melbourne, Brisbane and Townsville were some Australian stations heard regularly, while Auckland, Wellington and Arrarua in New Zealand came in loudly. With the aid of shipping-news we would select a ship leaving Sydney and find how far away its signals could be heard. One ship from which frequent transmissions could be heard was the S.S. "Niagara", which was on the Australian-America run. We could still hear its call-sign GBE, on the second night after it left New Zealand for America.

In those days the morse stations used loud "spark" signals because many of the ships were using crystal sets to receive messages. The Sydney Radio (VIS) sent out a news session at 10 p.m. on 1800 metres for ships in the Pacific Ocean and it was so loud that with the headphones on the table I could move nearly forty feet away to my front gate and still hear it. When broadcasting commenced it was found that the spark signals were so loud, and so broadly tuned, that they became a nuisance and seriously interfered with programmes. Consequently, morse signals were thereafter sent in a method called "continuous wave", which could be finely tuned.

Now, as more amateurs joined the ranks of transmitters it became the custom to write to those heard and receive an acknowledgement in the form of postcard - known as a QSL card - on which the station's call-sign was usually largely printed in red. Listeners would display on the walls near their set, cards from the stations which they had heard, those from far away having pride of place.

Station 2UW was then conducted by an amateur, Mr. Otto Sandel. On one occasion he announced that he would broadcast a programme which would be presented by well-known artists. When the date arrived, the artists failed to appear and he was forced to substitute gramophone records and enlist the aid of a number of neighbours (including one of my friends) who obligingly applauded the items while Mr. Sandel made little congratulatory speeches, apparently to the "artists". On another occasion he had an unfortunate experience when something went wrong with his tuning and he was accidentally transmitting on a wave-length of 600 metres which was reserved for shore - and ship-stations sending morse signals. Sydney Radio repeatedly ordered him, in morse code, to cease his transmission but he wasn't listening and he was eventually silenced by a telephone call.

Some amateur transmitters reached a high standard of broadcasting and the acknowledged leader of these was Mr. Charles Maclurean (2CM) of Strathfield. Eventually, his Sunday-night transmission of gramophone records was extended to two hours, and his unseen audience must have numbered many hundreds of listeners. The musical comedy "Sally", featuring the star Josie Melville, was then having a very successful run at Her Majesty's Theatre, which was on the present site of Centrepont. A popular musical number therein was "Look for the Silver Lining" and dozens of people would write and request that this number be included among the records played. Eventually 2CM always ended the programme with that number and we would all press the headphones tightly so as not to miss a note.

In 1922 "wireless" started to give way to "radio" as the name of this absorbing hobby and the newly-introduced "Wireless Weekly" was full of rumours about broadcasting. Ernest Fisk, the managing director of A.W.A. (a firm which had always opposed the granting of wireless licenses to amateurs) likened radio experimenters to children playing on the street. "Just as children had to get out of the way when cars came into use, so experimenters would have to get out of the way for broadcasting" he said. So there was general rejoicing among the amateurs when one of their number, (Jack Davis, a 16 year old boy) was successful in achieving a two-way contact with another amateur in England, thus beating the mighty A.W.A. which for some time had been using all its resources endeavouring to be the first!

Many people connected with ship- and shore-stations now left their jobs and opened Radio Shops in Sydney to take advantage of the sudden awakening of interest. These shops were soon doing a brisk business for most of the radio sets then in use were of a simple nature and were readily constructed with the parts on sale.

I had now progressed to a battery-operated three-valve set (still with a crystal detector) and with the aid of my very good aerial was hearing stations in all part of the world.

As 1923 advanced, there was hardly a home without some sort of set. A few people contended that radio was merely a passing fad and would soon be forgotten. How wrong they were!

When 2SB commenced to broadcast from the roof of the Smith's Weekly building, which was practically opposite the Rural Bank, a friend and I paid a lunch-hour visit. On the floor, in the sunshine, was the generator with two office-type electric fans directed on it to keep it cool. The Engineer, Ray Allsop, told us, in a whisper, that we could look into the Studio provided we remained very quiet and did not speak. The Studio comprised a small fibro-cement shed in which the one-man artist - announcer - newsreader, George Saunders, (later known as "Uncle George"), was pedalling a pianola. Suddenly he picked up two sticks and commenced to beat time with them, in Kettledrum fashion, on the frame of the pianola. The Engineer, his face red with rage, rushed out of his "control room" (another small shed) and looked as though he was going to attack us. Then, seeing us innocently standing by, he investigated the racket and sheepishly retreated when he discovered the cause of the dancing lights on his control:

Farmer & Company (2FC) contracted with A.W.A. to construct its station which was much more elaborate and had greater power. A large proportion of the listeners were the despised experimenters, who were greatly amused by A.W.A.'s Newspaper advertisements calling on "our friends, the radio experimenters", to give their opinions concerning the quality of reception of 2FC.

In those early days, broadcasting was not continuous but was conducted only at advertised times. The popular announcer at 2FC, Mr. A.S. Cochrane, had the portly figure associated with a typical shop-walker of the period - which was not surprising for he had actually been a shop-walker in Farmer's store. Each night, at 8 p.m. would be heard his announcement "Hello! Hello! This is 2FC. Tune in to the Studio Chimes". And for several minutes the chimes would be sounded to enable inexperienced listeners to select a good spot on the crystal and fiddle with coils and switches before settling down and probably having their ears pinched by new, too tightly fitting, head-phones.

At first, when broadcasting licences were introduced, intending listeners were required to choose whether they desired to listen to 2GB or 2FC and portion of the fee paid was transferred to the station of their choice. Then the radio set was sealed by the Post Office so that only that station could be heard. This was called the "sealed-set" system but it was not a satisfactory arrangement and was soon abandoned. The Commonwealth took over 2FC and 2GB (and the main stations in other capital cities) and a general licence was introduced that entitled listeners to tune-in to any station.

At that time radio birthday calls to young (and not so young) listeners were very popular. To the familiar strains of "Happy Birthday to you" the announcer would say, for example, "Little Willie Brown is six years old today. Happy Birthday Willie! If you look under the china cabinet you'll find a present".

The wife of my boss in the Bank -- an elderly, very difficult and very bald-headed man, who was absolutely devoid of any sense of humour -- thought it would be nice if he received a birthday call. So she sent a letter to the Station telling them of FitzGibbon's anniversary (That was really his name!) Then, as he usually listened only to classical music from 2FC, she had great difficulty in persuading him to tune to 2GB. Eventually, on some pretence, he was induced to listen and he had just settled down and adjusted the headphones when George Saunders, the Announcer, said - "And now we come to a special call to my young friend FitzGibbon Fingleton. Happy Birthday, FitzGibbon! Look under the skirting board and you'll find a silver-fish! Eat up your crusts and your hair will grow nice and curly". FitzGibbon dragged off the headphones and flung them violently against the wall. "!!!!xxxxx****" (censored) he said. From that time onward he listened only to classical music from 2FC.

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Now, in this Golden Jubilee Year of Broadcasting, these are some of my memories as I look back to the time of its beginnings in 1923 -- and to my own launching on the wireless waves five years earlier.

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