



THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY —

NEWSLETTER

J A N U A R Y

1 9 7 4

PRICE: 5c.

Registered for posting as a Periodical, Category C

THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Sponsored by Kogarah Municipal Council)

President:

Mr. J. E. Veness,
6 Lance Avenue,
BLAKEHURST. 2221.

'Phone 546 3932.

Hon. Treasurer

Mrs. P. Briancourt,
9 The Mall,
SOUTH HURSTVILLE. 2220.

'Phone 546 2156.

Hon. Secretary:

Mrs. E. Butters,
36 Louisa Street,
OATLEY. 2223.

'Phone 57 6954.

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.
Subscriptions: £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).

PARKING: Cars may be parked in the ground floor parking area, the entrance to which is in Wick's Lane, at the rear of the Civic Centre. Post Office Lane alongside the Civic Centre has one-way traffic and it is necessary to enter at Montgomery Street end. From that Lane you turn left into Wick's Lane and use the first entrance into the parking area. An alternative way is to enter Wick's Lane from Kensington Street. In such case, use the second entrance into the parking area.

CARSS PARK 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 Officer:

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

'Phone 587 2938.

OUR JANUARY MEETING

The next meeting will be held on 11th January, at 8 p.m. in the Exhibition Lounge on the second floor of the Civic Centre Belgrave Street, Kogarah. We have been fortunate in obtaining a colour film which tells a story which begins in the rotting prison-hulks of England and moves on to the convicts and early settlers at Port Jackson. We see such tragedies as but why am I telling you now? You'll see it for yourself on 11th January.

The Competition Prize on this occasion has been donated by Father Christmas.

The ladies on Supper Roster will be Mrs. Smith and Miss McEwen.

OUR DECEMBER CHRISTMAS PARTY

Over 200 friends joined in the open air Christmas night at Carss' Cottage on December 13th.

Everything went according to plan, good weather, chicken-in-basket dinner, with Christmas cake and coffee to follow and then the show.

Miss Pamela Hawken and her very good friends from various musical societies presented in full costume excerpts from "The Desert Song" and "Brigadoon". Whilst the children romped on the lawn adults enjoyed the fine singing of Rodney Smith in the lovely old numbers such as "One Alone", as only Rodney can sing it. He was assisted by Wess Waylen and Colin Clark, Joan Worrall and Lorraine Crane. The ballet teacher, Miss June Gapps and her two pupils delighted all with their dancing as did Kim and Brett Green, the junior members of the team.

Young and old joined in the enjoyment of singing the Christmas Carols. It was celebrating Christmas in the way it is meant to be, simple songs, good fellowship and a feeling of peace out in the open under the same stars that witnessed the scene at the stable so many years ago.

The President thanked the company and the pianist for their delightful music and dancing and the evening concluded with the singing of Auld Lang Syne, and best wishes to one and all for a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

My own thanks go to the President, Mr. Veness, and members of the Management and Social Committees for all their hard work and co-operation that ensured the success of this event. We are grateful to Mr. Dick Sneddon, without whose help we would not have had the assistance given from the Sea Scouts, and to Mrs. Iris Lovatt for making four Christmas cakes that we all enjoyed so much. And, of course, we appreciate the support we received from members and friends who comprised the large audience which enjoyed the entertaining show.

Winner of the hamper was ticket No. 162 Mrs. Turpin; Second prize, a ham, was ticket No. 122 Mr. J. Cox. SYLVIA KELLY

A WORD FROM MRS. D.A. HATTON

Further to the paragraph in last month's "Newsletter", my daughter and I have been asked by several members if we are deserting Kogarah, but we are merely helping a sister society with the same aims as ours.

MUSEUM REPORT

While recently looking at the comments in the day book for the last year it is very noticeable that we have benefited greatly from the visits of many people. These people have contributed information and items which have been of value in widening our historical knowledge of the district.

The photographic exhibition on display in the front room has generated a great amount of interest as people have been excited by being able to identify people, homes and landmarks. An example of this was the discovery by Miss Terry Richards of her great grandfather who was a conductor on the Sans Souci Steam Tram. Mrs. B. Higgins after viewing the display on the St. George Girls High School donated further photographic material.

As well as photographs many interesting items have been given to the museum by visitors. "Cocky Bennett", the famed bird from the Sea Breeze Hotel, has been offered by a relative of Mrs. Sarah Bennett who was the proprietress of the Hotel and owner of "Cocky".

From these few examples it can be seen that the existence of the Museum is encouraging people to preserve history rather than destroy it.

Donations:- We acknowledge with many thanks the following items which have been donated to the Museum during the last month:-

3 assorted glass bottles; 1 glass apothecary beaker;
1 box of wax tapers and a baby's feeding bottle - donated by Mrs. F. Scipione.

2 mother-of-pearl buckles; 1 metal buckle; 1 hair comb;
a metal cross; and a military insignia. - donated by Mrs. A. Newlyn.

Museum Roster - If any of these dates are not suitable please advise me as soon as possible (587 2090):-

13th Jan. Mr. & Mrs. Kelly
20th Jan. Mrs. Johns & Mrs. Taylor
27th Jan. Mrs. McOnie & Miss Foley
3rd Feb. Mr. & Mrs. Lean
10th Feb. Mr. K. Grieve & Mrs. James
17th Feb. Dr. D.J. & Mrs. D.A. Hatton

Volunteers are required for the Australia Day Holiday.

COLLEEN McEWEN

REMINISCENCES OF KOGARAH

Mrs. Rose Schneider, a four feet six inches high, ordinary resident of Kogarah, has lived all but two years of her life in only two houses. She carried on the duties of an ordinary housewife - she cooks, keeps the house tidy, goes shopping for supplies once a week, even grows vegetables and makes home made jam. She is now 85 years old and her memory is phenomenal.

We first met Mrs. Schneider one Sunday afternoon when we were out driving with some members of the English family, and Jack English saw an old couple sitting on the front verandah of an old house and thought they might know something of the early people of the district. So we met the Schneiders and there was a reunion of two ladies who had not met for forty or fifty years, one was Mrs. Schneider, now 85, and the other, Mrs. Walter English, now 80.

After preliminary greetings were over we asked "Did you know Elioth Gruner the painter, when he lived next door in 1910?" Oh yes, she knew him well, a very quiet, tall chap. He had a job at David Jones' lace and glove counter during the week but every Sunday morning he took his easel and stool and you could see him sitting in the park and painting. She lost contact with him when he left the district but remembers that she read he had died about 1939. (Elioth Gruner won the Wynne Prize for landscape painting on seven occasions, some of the winning paintings are of scenes around Kogarah, and one of his paintings was recently sold by Christie's of London for £26,000.) His mother Mrs. Gruner, was a little woman, a widow, and she and Mrs. Schneider used to cut butter into pounds in the butter factory located on the site now occupied by Kogarah Private Hospital.

Did she know Joanna, the daughter of the English family who died in 1898? Yes, she knew her, she was an invalid, and this is the first person who has actually known Joanna English; although members of the family can tell us of her existence, none knew her. After all, Mrs. Schneider was born only four years after the railway came through Kogarah and just two years after the first meeting of Kogarah Council.

Her grandfather, Joseph Smitt, had market gardens at the top of English Street on nine acres of land, previously part of the English estate. Next door were the gardens of Philip Weber, after whom was named Webbers Road, which ultimately became English Street. Mrs. Weber was the step sister of Granny Smitt.

Grandfather Smitt came out to Australia to work for the Macarthur family at Camden in the 1850's. Then he worked for the Hoskings at Vacluse where he was caretaker, and Granny Smitt the cook. John Hosking was the first Mayor of Sydney elected on 9th November, 1842. He was married on 26th June, 1829, to Martha Foxlow Terry, daughter of Samuel Terry, the "Rothschild of Botany Bay" and during the 1830's the merchant firm of Hughes and Hosking became rapidly prosperous, with

extensive property in Sydney and the country. (John Terry Hughes married Samuel Terry's step-daughter.) With the financial crisis of 1843, his assets rapidly diminished, but he seems to have recovered because in 1854 he constructed a fine home called "Carrara" at Vaucluse Point. Here, the Smitt's first child, Catherine, was born in 1856, and she later became Mrs. Schneider's mother, and her house at Kogarah, still occupied by Mrs. Schneider, has a bronze name plate of "Carrara". The mansion at Vaucluse is now "Strickland House" a home for elderly ladies who have one of the most delightful views of the Harbour and the Opera House.

The Smitts subsequently came to Kogarah and established gardens, with a stone fruit orchard and big vineyards. The Smitt's gardens extended from English Street to Anglo Square and the Weber's next door were not quite as large. Both their homes were in the middle of the properties where Jubilee Avenue (previously Station Street) now runs. English Street was then a gravel road and a track about two feet wide was cut across the bush between the gardens and Carlton Station, for all and sundry to use.

Mrs. Schneider remembers working in the gardens, running through them with a clacker to scare the birds; her grandmother standing in water to clean carrots and husking seed in a shed for use in the next planting. The Smitt's had ten children but only three survived to adulthood. The Weber's did not have any children. Old Mr. Weber was regarded as a cruel man and people called him "Old Bismark" to his face. He slept on a feather bed, but his wife had to sleep on chaff bags.

Mrs. Schneider knows all the Kogarah identities of the early 1900's: the English family; Peter Moore (an enormous man who used to crochet and knit) and his wife, a short stout woman who played the organ at St. Patrick's Church, (She died in 1899); old Mrs. Moore wearing her poke bonnet sitting in Church in the Moore pew; the Souths; Hickeys; Mullarkeys; Clunes; McColes; Hermans; Climpsons; Dillons; Lippmans; Fitzgeralds; Laceys; Judes; Murphy's dairy; Lamberts; Venns; Foleys; O'Mearas, etc. And she knows the intermingling of families that occurred by marriage - a Smitt married Climpson, Climpson married English, O'Meara married Dillon, Beavers married English, Doughan married Clune, Hatfield married English, Moore married Lippman.

When she was talking about the shopping centre at Kogarah, Mrs. Schneider was asked if she knew Mrs. Emily Ashman, our Aunt, who had a choice fruit and confectionery shop in Railway Parade (now the site of Coles), which was known as the "Hospital" Shop in the early 1900's. "Yes, George Ashman used to cut grass from the Smitt's garden for his horse", was the reply.

Talking with people who remember these times also makes one realise what a great influence Sir Joseph Carruthers, or as he is known, Joey Carruthers, had on the Kogarah district. This local boy was associated with so many community projects in the formative years of the municipality - The St. George Cottage

Hospital, School of Arts, Fire Brigade, Kogarah Public School. He had a lot of sway and could get anyone a job - an important thing in those days.

Sir Joseph Carruthers first lived in a weather board house called "Oakhill" in Kogarah Road, opposite Bowns Road. Then he built a fine house at the other end of his property near Rocky Point Road, at the present location of Ercildoune Street. The driveway to the house was at first through the Fitzgerald Estate, but subsequently Hector Street (his second name was Hector) was made. Unfortunately when it was incorporated in the road across Beverley Park the name disappeared, to be replaced by Jubilee Avenue. So was lost a memory of this man. The house was demolished in the 1920's and the stone used in road paving, but the Coach House still remains in a much altered form behind Calvary Hospital. Carruthers Drive at Doll's Point still remains, although in a much shorter form than its original length. And even "Ellesmere" at Sans Souci, his last home in the St. George area - where he was Premier of New South Wales - has had many alterations during the years.

The father of Mrs. Schneider, Anthony Bernard Herzog, was the tinsmith and plumber of Kogarah for nearly thirty years. He made the watering cans for the market gardeners of the district, and so contributed a mundane, prosaic, essential article of those times, but now of great historical value, if our knowledge of the ways of these pioneers are to be preserved. Streams of fresh water ran from the ridge at Carlton and Allawah, through the market gardens to provide water for their small dams. These streams ran as drains across Kogarah Road to Scarborough Park. The water was good to drink and declared so after analysis at the Hawkesbury Agricultural College. A wooden house at the corner of Kogarah Road and Ocean Street was known as "Watergully" by the children, as water ran underneath it.

Mrs. Schneider's mother grew flowers in the front garden of their home. They were made into posies to take to the market, violets with snowdrops in the centre, and jonquils - fifty to a bunch. These flower beds were carefully tended to produce the best blooms, but one day her mother went out to find the flowers gone and beds trampled down - the cows belonging to Michael McCole, the policeman, had eaten them and Michael later said the milk had tasted very good that day. These flower gardens were a great attraction also to others, and one of the Chinese market gardeners was specially interested, so much so that he was always picking some blooms for himself. So one day her mother sprinkled the flowers with pepper and soon they heard him sneezing all along the road.

Mrs. Edmund English Snr. was affectionately known to the children as "Old Dinny". They would frequently see him sitting in his rocking chair on the verandah of the "Homestead" as they passed. Of course Mrs. Schneider knew him well because she was 24 years old when he died in 1912, in his 95th year.

Mrs. Schneider has seen many changes in the 83 years she has lived in Kogarah. Did we realise that the fire brigade was first located on the other corner of Kensington & Gray Streets, where the Baby Health Centre is now? (The first building was erected in 1895 and it was not until 1907 that the present building was opened). She knows because she actually saw it there, not as we do because we read about it. And if we want to know who built or lived in some of the old houses of Kogarah, just ask her - she knows.

Mrs. Jane Harriett Bray, another four feet six inches ordinary housewife of Westbourne street, was born on 23rd March 1885 at Alexandria. Her parents landed in Sydney on Christmas Day 1883. Her father was a jeweller in England, but to get work in Australia he first went to Werrie Creek as a railway fettler and Mrs. Bray has the first money he earned, a fourpenny peice, which she treasures. In 1887, when she was two years old, the family moved to a two-roomed cottage which is still standing in Austral Street, Kogarah, and her father went to work on the construction of the Sans Souci Tramway. Rocky Point Road was then a little different from today - trees had to be clared off the road so that the lines could be laid. Aborigines lived in bush huts between Sandringham and Sans Souci. There was a track from Austral Street to the beach, crossing a little bridge over the creek. At Moorefield, at President Avenue, there was a punt and tiny rowing boat in the creek and the children would go sailing down to Doll's Point in them.

After work on the Tramway was finished, Mrs. Bray's father went to work on the railway at Redfern, but because he thought it was too far to travel and he preferred to be in the bush, he came to work at Hurstville Station. Here he was accidentally killed on the lines about 1895, in his early forties. He was the fifth person to be buried at the Sutherland Cemetery which was mainly bushland then. Mrs. Bray's mother lived on to the age of 93, passing away in 1951.

Mrs. Bray herself is no stranger to accidents. Three weeks after Queen Victoria died in 1901, when she was 15, she was coming home from work by train. She tried to get into the first carriage but it was crowded with men, so she went into the second carriage. At Sydenham Station the train ran off the lines into an "upstairs" house, and nine people in the first carriage died in this rail disaster. Mrs. Bray can describe the accident clearly. She has her own theories on why the accident occurred on this rainy Friday afternoon. It was a "through" train, first stop at Tempe, so it was going very fast at the time. The engine first ran off the lines, then somehow travelled back in the opposite direction and she remembered seeing it go past her carriage with flames coming from it. The first carriage went up a hill and turned upside down and had to be chopped up to get the people out. Mrs. Bray was injured enough to spend a week in bed, but saw the funeral train from Carlton Station on the Sunday for Sutherland. The

policeman's son was buried alongside Mrs. Bray's father.

Five months later, on Wednesday 10th July 1901, she was shopping with a friend, Maude Bisby, in the basement of Anthony Horderns Haymarket store for prizes for the Sunday School. A man came running down the stairs shouting for them to get out as the place was on fire. It was early morning and there were only 2 or 3 shoppers there, but they ran down the shop, up the stairs, and fortunately a cleaner had left the door unlocked and they were able to escape into Barlow Street. The fire flew through this building, then leapt across lanes to the third floor of a seven storey building. People below this floor escaped easily, but soon a young man was seen on the roof, unable to escape through the building. Desperate efforts were made by fireman and policemen to try to reach him with a fire escape, but it reached only to the fifth floor. During this time the dense smoke frequently obscured sight of the man from the crowd standing below, but each time he reappeared the crowd shouted to him to keep up his spirits. While further attempts were being made to adjust the fire escape to reach higher, it is thought the man must have believed that attempts to rescue him would prove futile, for he was seen to remove his hat, cast his eyes heavenward as if engaged in prayer, extend his arms, and he dropped from the parapet to the crowd's horror. His sufferings and his leap into eternity were all observed by Mrs. Bray, she remembers it so vividly and will always remember it.

Next to Anthony Horderns were three gasometers which two hours before were full and were rapidly discharged when the fire started. The officials of the Australian Gas Light Company said there was no chance of an explosion unless a hole was knocked through the ironwork, it being perfectly gas-tight. "Seldom had a greater strain been put on belief in professional opinion" - so reports the newspaper. By 9 a.m. all the employees had arrived and they started to salvage goods, handing them out of doors and windows to waiting Horderns' delivery carts. The fire was seen from numerous suburbs and it looked as if the whole town was on fire, so naturally people flocked to the city. People were knocked down by the trams until they stopped running, and soon 100 trams were present between the Railway and George Street, and they were imprisoned overnight. The next day it was found that four men had not returned home so their disappearance meant that five people had died in the conflagration, a small number considering the size of the fire. In view of the difficulties of reaching people on the upper floors, there was agitation that there should be a limit on the heights of buildings at least to a level where fire fighting was possible.

The Anthony Hordern's fire was one of the biggest in Australia up to that time. There was loss of half a million pounds worth of stock and their advertisement next day said "We are burnt out". Mr. Horden was unavailable for several days for interview as he was so shocked. However, as they had been stock-piling imports in their bulk store, they were able to carry on, and that very day they were starting in temporary

premises at the Exhibition Building at Prince Alfred Park.

Mrs. Bray was a pupil at the little school in Regent Street, when there was only the schoolmaster's house with school attached. Across the front was a long weatherboard building where the "big" children were taught. There was a tennis court also, where the lady teachers played in long dresses and big hats. The Beavers girls were teachers. She remembers when Wally Kemp threw an inkwell at the teacher. Joey Carruthers' daughter Ida, the daughter of the punt operator at Tom Ugly's, Mr. Frater's daughter and Ida Jude were there with her. Joey Carruthers, despite his eminent position in the district, was not stuck up - he would talk to anyone. His young son was killed in an accident on his bicycle near Austral Street.

After her father's death, the family had a grocer shop at Gray Street and Railway Parade. At 14, Mrs. Bray finished school and went to work as assistant in tailoring in the city at Sydney Arcade, George Street. She received 2/- a week with 6d. rise at birthdays. However, the train fare was 1/2d. a week. She was more fortunate, she thought, to get this job as the dressmakers did not get any pay for the first six months as they were learning the trade.

Then she went into service at Sans Souci and when this family returned to Africa she went into service at Penshurst. Then at 19 she was married and has been happy ever since. She moved into her present house on her daughter's birthday in 1911 and as they were living nearby at the time they watched their very own house being built. The block of land cost fifty pounds and the brick house three hundred & twenty three pounds. This was at the back of the English property and Anglo Square was then all wild bush and there were animals and snakes galore - 40 black snakes were found in one week when the house was being built. People dumped their garbage there which only encouraged the situation. When the reserve was being cleared the Mayor, "Bull" Matthews, came specially to see them to warn against their children playing there as so many snakes had been found.

Mrs. Bray also has seen changes while she has lived at Kogarah. The Kogarah Cottage Hospital was only four rooms and the children cut across the grounds on their way to school.

There were houses along Railway Parade between Gray Street and the Kogarah Post Office, which then was only one small room, the entrance to which in Railway Parade is now bricked up, and only 3 or 4 people could get in at once. Her brother delivered letters around Sans Souci on horseback. She remembers when at the intersection of Rocky Point and Ramsgate Roads, the only building was the tram waiting shed. The children frequently went to Carss' property, and would get through the fence and wander around the bush. A cattle stealer lived there in a cave in the thick bushland and was able to evade a police hunt for him, but later he was found asleep at Arncliffe and easily arrested.

The area around the Sans Souci Hotel was a great picnic ground and very popular, with people arriving by carriages. The Prince of Wales Hotel at Sandringham was beside a little creek and there was a little bridge over the creek, then one went into a big room where boxing matches were held.

Mrs. Bray's husband sold fruit around the district and several times fruit disappeared from the storeroom at their house. The police were told and a policeman stayed all night at their home to see if it was the night-soil people, who were under suspicion. But later the culprit was found to be a young lad from down the road. So some things have changed and some have not.

Recently, along with other residents in Westbourne Street, Mrs. Bray received a letter from Kogarah Council of a proposal to change the name of the street to Anglo Square. Despite her arthritis, this 88 years old lady presented herself at Kogarah Civic Centre to lodge a strong protest against this unnecessary proposal. She has lived in Westbourne Street for nearly 70 years, she came when there were only two houses, she had her home built there and she sees no reason to make a change - why can't they leave it alone!

This essay has been written in the hope that other members will realise the treasure of local history which is stored in the memories of people like Mrs. Schneider and Mrs. Bray - not prominent citizens like Sir Joseph Carruthers, but "ordinary residents" of Kogarah.

"We are the sum of those before
They live in us, no less, no more".
Mary Gilmore

(Responsibility for the content of this article lies with
Dr. D.J. and Mrs. D.A. Hatton)