



# THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

NOVEMBER

1974

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THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Sponsored by Kogarah Municipal Council)

President:

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6 Lance Avenue,  
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Hon. Treasurer:

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'Phone: 587 4848

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 - Ordinary Members: \$1.50 per annum.  
Pensioners: \$1.00 " "  
Students: \$1.00 " "

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 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:

Mrs. J. A. Lean,  
24 Victoria Ave.,  
PENSHURST, 2222

'Phone 57 5940.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO NEWSLETTER: Contributions of articles and information of local interest for publication in this Newsletter will be welcomed if forwarded to the Publications Officer:

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

'Phone 587 2938.

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Our next meeting will be held on Thursday, 14th November, 1974 at 8 p.m. in the Exhibition Lounge of the Civic Centre, Belgrave Street, Kogarah. Our interesting Speaker on this occasion, is Commander L.E. Forsythe of the Schnapper Island Museum, who will speak on the History of State Navies.

The prize for the Raffle has been donated by Mrs. Beaven.

The ladies on Supper Roster are Mrs. Greenaway and Mrs. Slater.

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PLEASE NOTE: December 12 (our usual meeting night) will take the form of our Christmas-Get-Together at Carss Cottage -- see details in Social News below -- And don't forget to add your name to the list.

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#### SOCIAL NEWS.

November 16th "A Duet in Two Hands" at the Illawarra Guild Theatre, Waltz St., Rockdale at 8 p.m. This is a drama set in the Orkney Isles in 1904 and should be very entertaining. Tickets \$1.50 each.

November 24th. A coach tour to Dural to visit Vision Valley. The beautiful country scenery of Dural is worth going to see. A visit to Swane's Nursery is also included. Coach will leave Kogarah Civic Centre at 10 a.m. and return 5 p.m. Bring a Picnic Lunch. Tickets \$2.00 each.

December 12th at 6.30 p.m. Our Christmas Night at Carss' Cottage. As this is to be a Bar-B-Q your names on the list will be appreciated to assist with the catering. A pleasant evening in the open air - Congenial Company - and fine Christmas Entertainment by courtesy of Brandman Music Studio, Rockdale - plus good steaks and all for \$2.50 (children - half serve - \$1.00).

Christmas Cards are on sale for 10 cents each and Christmas Hamper Tickets are available at \$1.00 for ten tickets. All Butts for Christmas Hamper to be returned at next General Meeting (if possible).

Please phone me on 587-0986 for any bookings!

A Cheerio Call to Mrs. Smith, who is now home from hospital.

Sylvia Kelly.

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ITEMS FROM TREASURER'S OCTOBER REPORT. Museum Entrance Fees \$31.80, Sale of Jams \$32.95, Raffle \$16.00, Sale of Pottery \$2.30.

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DEATH OF MR. FRED HAYMAN. In our September Newsletter we reported that following the death of Mrs. Thelma Hayman, her husband, Mr. Fred Hayman, who had not been well for a long time, had finally been persuaded to enter the St. George Hospital, and the hope was expressed that some treatment would restore him to good health.

Unfortunately, an examination disclosed that his condition was far worse than anticipated, and it is with sincere regret that we announce his death, which occurred on the 29th October.

Our deep sympathy is extended to Son Neil and Daughter Maureen (Mrs. Copley) on the sad loss of both parents over such a short period.

An interesting article, contributed by Mrs. Thelma Hayman is printed in this Newsletter.

### MUSEUM COMMITTEE REPORT.

There has been much discussion regarding the Museum, by members of the Committee, and while it is agreed that good progress has been made, we are very anxious to proceed further, for the best possible results we are able to achieve, in the interest of the society's aims, and the pleasure of our many visitors to the Museum.

Ideas for advancement in the presentation of our collection, are constantly in mind, and are being implemented when and wherever possible.

We anticipate an early start on necessary repairs to the exterior of the cottage and hope to see the hitching post (which was recently donated to the Society, by the St. George Historical Society), placed in position near the driveway to Carss' Cottage. The Museum signpost will be moved to a more suitable location, between the two gum trees, where it should look attractive and still catch the light from the old style lamp.

Storage space, made available by Council, at the Civic Centre, is being used, and will be further used to accommodate a number of items which must be stored until favourable arrangements can be made for an additional covered display area, in conjunction with the Museum. This necessity is under consideration at present, by the Committee Members.

As usual, we have had a number of recent donations, and acknowledge with many thanks the following articles --

An Imperial Quart Bottle, with stopper, "Plasto's Ship Hotel" and illustration of sailing vessel, etched into glass and A small iron (child's toy) heated by means of hot coal or coke embers - Both donated by Mrs. G. Taylor

Several gifts came from Miss Coxhead and Mrs. Newlyn, including a tiny cotton doll's dress (or pinafore) featuring drawn thread work, and other fine stitchery.

A printed Memorial Card, relating to the death of Queen Victoria, a small red velvet pincushion, jeweller's box and gentleman's blade razor, of English manufacture.

The National Trust Desk Diary (1973) compiled by Joanna Richards and Elizabeth Reeve for the Women's Committee of the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.). This contains about forty black and white, and four coloured, reproductions of historic paintings and engravings of early ships, and Australian scenes.

In addition to these items, we also acknowledge the donation of a copy of "The Sun" Newspaper, dated 7th September 1923, which was found at Blackhurst Public School and given to the Society by the Deputy Headmaster, Mr. Broadshaw.

I'm sure all who read the reports in our September Newsletter, will appreciate this interesting account of what was happening to Carss Bush in 1923, and many thanks are due to Mr. Bradshaw, and also to Kay Veness for the part she played in the event.

### MUSEUM ROSTER

November	17th	--	Mr. and Mrs. J. Howard
"	24th	--	Mrs. D. Hatton and Mrs. M. Grieve
December	1st	--	Mr. and Mrs. J. Lean
"	8th	--	Mrs. D. Diment and Miss P. Diment
"	15th	--	Mrs. S. McOnie and Miss P. Foley
"	22nd	--	Mr. K. Grieve and Mrs. K. Slater
"	29th	--	Mrs. G. Johns and Mrs. G. Taylor

Volunteers are requested for 26th December (Boxing Day) and 1st January, 1975 (New Year's Day).

If date given on roster is inconvenient please ring 57-5940 or see me at the meeting and we can arrange an alternative day for you.

Gwen Lean  
(Museum Convener).

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#### R.A.H.S. Conference for Affiliated Societies.

Each year, the Royal Australian Historical Society hold a Conference with affiliated societies, and this serves as an opportunity to meet and have discussions with delegates from other local societies throughout the state and to hear some very interesting speakers on a variety of subjects.

On Friday night, 18th October, in History House, Macquarie Street, the Hon. Mr. Justice R. Else-Mitchell, the President, welcomed delegates and introduced the first Speaker, Professor Manning Clark, who presented an interesting talk "On Being an Historian".

On Saturday, 19th October at 9.30 a.m. the Conference continued in the Blue Rooms, Newtown (very suitable for the purpose) when Mrs. Judy Mackinolty, of the School of Education, University of New South Wales, spoke on the subject of "District Societies and the Local School". Mrs. Mackinolty considered that in the near future there will be more scope for co-operation between local societies and especially primary schools.

Following morning tea, Associate Professor K.S. Cable, University of Sydney, dealt in an interesting fashion with "Australian History in the School".

After Dr. J. S. Cumpston, President of the Canberra and District Historical Society had spoken on "Shipping Movements from Sydney in the Colony's First Forty Years" a most enjoyable luncheon was provided.

Then, of particular interest to me, the subject "The Resources and Available Services of the Mitchell Library" was covered by Mr. R. F. Doust, Principal Librarian of N.S.W. and Miss D.G. Rhodes, Senior Librarian in Charge of Reference Services in the Mitchell Library. This was followed by afternoon tea during which time was taken to have a chat with other delegates. Then there was a general discussion until 4.45 p.m. when refreshments were served and the Conference closed at 5.45 p.m.

For those delegates who were able to attend Sunday (unfortunately I wasn't) there was a service, followed by an inspection of Church Archives, at St. Thomas' Church, North Sydney, and lunch at the Church Hall. This was followed by a Bus Tour of historic places in North Sydney.

V.S.S.

## HURSTVILLE'S PICTURE THEATRES

by Thelma Hayman

Way back in 1910, when motion pictures were just about emerging from their infancy, an enterprising group of Hurstville business men formed a syndicate to present to residents the open-air Hurstville Picture Palace on the corner of Crofts Avenue and Cross Street on the site later occupied by Mick Simmon's store. Mr. J. Garthon was the very popular Manager.

The "palace" was constructed of weather-board and corrugated iron, with the entrance in Crofts Avenue. On either side and above the entrance the walls were completely covered by posters advertising the current and future attractions.

The ticket-box was placed on the left hand side of the entrance porch and patrons, having decided whether to select the sixpenny or threepenny seats (children were admitted for a penny-halfpenny) then entered on to the brick floor of the palace. The galvanised-iron screen was erected on the Cross Street side and its brightness was ensured by frequent coats of white paint. Under a cover, above the entrance-porch was a honky-tonk piano and from here a young lady deftly selected music to match the mood of the film. Before the commencement of the show, and at interval, she was assisted by a violinist.

By a coincidence, Number 1, Volume 1 of a newspaper was issued at about this time and called the "Propeller" "in honour of Hurstville's past lack of propulsion" as it was explained in the first issue. Modest advertisements therein did not include the names of films but were mostly confined to the statement that "weather permitting, we open on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays." And here was the serious trouble. Patrons were eager to enjoy the novelty of moving pictures, but as the "palace" was completely open to the sky, very often the weather did not "permit" and many performances needed to be cancelled because of rain.

To remedy this unsatisfactory state of affairs, the pictures were moved temporarily to the Hurstville Hall (where prices were increased to 6d & 1/-) while a roof was constructed over the sixpenny seats (always called "the good seats") back in the palace and in that section a wooden floor was fixed above the bricks. Then, in August 1911, it was advertised that "the work of placing a permanent cover over the Hurstville Picture Palace is now complete and the Management promises to re-open with an extraordinarily good programme. Absolutely nothing but the latest and most humorous pictures will be shown. To educate, not to demoralise. Seats 6d. and 3d and children are half-price in front".

Propeller news items indicate that patrons received their monies' worth for in one week the programmes included "The Squatter's Daughter", the Johnson Fight, "Moonlight the Bushranger" and "Marvellous Melbourne, Queen City of the South, with Pictures of the Noble Yarra".

And when Field-Marshal Lord Kitchener paid a visit to Sydney, we were assured that "this hero of Khartoum is shown with a fidelity and brilliance of detail that supercedes all other attempts".

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The partial roofing-in of the show gave no protection to those sitting in the threepenny seats and if rain came during the first part of the programme there was a rush by those in the cheap seats to take shelter under the roof at the rear which covered the "good seats". If the rain cleared, patrons returned to their seats and the show continued. If, however, the rain appeared likely to set in, tickets for the next night were distributed. Not so if the rain came after interval and it became impossible to continue. In such a case the screening was cancelled and patrons left the theatre. I cannot remember anyone making a fuss about this arrangement.

Motion pictures were now gradually improving in quality and were entering a period where, in the absence of other forms of competition, good attendances were assured. A large proportion of the residents paid a weekly visit. A local poet, who may have done very well in some other form of occupation, penned these lines which were printed in the Propeller -

They say there is none like it,  
No other so good shall grow.  
As startling, heroic, jolly and true  
As Hurstville Picture Show.

'Tis only threepence to enter,  
To put your heart aglow,  
To see the cowboys rescue men  
At Hurstville Picture Show.

They show some scenic pictures  
Of Iceland and its snow,  
Of England and its glory  
At Hurstville Picture Show.

So roll-up! roll-up! and see them  
And I'm sure that you will throw  
A good many hearty glances  
At Hurstville Picture Show.

But, as the reader will agree, you can't please everybody! One rate-payer bitterly complained to Hurstville Council that the rays from a searchlight, placed on the picture show roof for advertising purposes, had killed her fruit trees!

Events proceeded slowly, at first, with steadily increasing non-critical audiences who were kept happy and contented by the efforts of Mr. Garthon who was most active in all sections of the business. When the Star Picture Palace (re-named the Subway following the construction of the railway subway) was opened on the corner of Railway Parade and Webbers Road (later called English Street) Carlton, Mr. Garthon could even be seen, at interval, riding his bicycle to Carlton to exchange the films he had shown for others screened at the Star.

At about the end of World War 1, a second picture theatre, known as the Queen's, was opened at the corner of Rosa Street and Forest Road on the site later occupied by the Frisco Furniture Store. This was a brick building, with its entrance in Forest Road and with exits into Rosa Street. The live-wire Manager was Mr. A. E. Humphrey who was later an alderman of Hurstville Council.

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Competition between the rival shows was keen and the Propeller benefited from the increased advertising that blossomed forth. The reader would be excused for thinking that this 1919 advertisement of the Queen's ~~was~~ one written in 1974 - "Theda Bara, the most wicked woman on the screen. SIN, SIN, SIN!" Large advertisements of both theatres stressed the stupendous attractions which starred Dorothy Dalton, Mabel Normand, Mary Miles Minter, Charlie Chaplin, Fatty Arbuckle, Larry Semon, Mae Marsh, Mary Pickford (the World's Sweetheart), Douglas Fairbanks, Tom Mix, May Allison, Constance Talmadge, Alice Brady, the Keystone Cops and Mack Sennett comedies were either the most beautiful, graceful, radiant, gorgeous, elegant or dazzling or were so humorous that members of the audience risked laughing until their sides split!

Then came a setback to the motion picture industry. Soldiers returning from overseas were thought to have been the innocent carriers of pneumonic influenza and soon an epidemic that took many lives was raging. In an endeavour to halt the wave of illness, the Government imposed on all who left their homes the necessity of wearing masks over nose and mouth, and compulsorily closed all theatres.

When the epidemic eased, and the Hurstville theatres opened for one night each week, the St. George District Hospital was still reporting a number of 'flu admissions each week and there were still a number of deaths. The Hurstville Picture Palace advertised "This is the Garden Theatre. The Healthiest Show on the Line". The Queen's countered with "This Theatre is fumigated before each performance with the Best Disinfectant obtainable".

In April 1920 the Queen's re-opened after the first of several renovations over the years, with the announcement that it was now under the direction of Kenneth Broadfoot who was connected with the largest film exchange in Sydney. The Queen's had been extensively renovated and decorated and "the Grand Orchestra of seven performers may be heard in a brilliant musical programme".

A fatal accident occurred at the Hurstville Picture Palace in March 1922. It appears that it was the custom to regularly inspect a three-inch diameter gas pipe leading to the gas engine, and when performing this duty, Mr. Richard M. Simmons, the manager, who was a son-in-law of Mr. Garthon, was affected by a rush of gas and, in moving aside, struck his head. He was later found dead.

In 1920, without any prior announcement, the two picture shows commenced to jointly advertise under the heading " amalgamated Theatres" and competition then ceased.

Mr. J. Garthon, who had been Managing Director since the Hurstville Picture Palace opened in 1910, announced his retirement in September 1923. It had been largely due to his efforts that the show had been so successful, but now, owing to ill-health, he had disposed of his shares in the company.

In 1924, residents saw an impressively large brick building being erected in Forest Road, near the Traffic Bridge, and rumours soon spread that Hurstville was to have a new picture theatre that would vie in popularity with the very best in Sydney. And so, late in September, the Strand Theatre was declared open by Mr. T. J. Ley, M.L.A., Minister for Justice.



The opening of the Strand excited great public interest because, for that period, it was a very elegant theatre indeed. The entrance was in Forest Road on the side nearest the Traffic Bridge. It opened into a large vestibule with the ticket-box on the left side and the entrance to the Stalls on the right. A very impressive carpeted staircase led to a large foyer where lollies and chocolates, ice-creams and sodas were dispensed from a counter which extended the whole width of the theatre. This business was conducted by a Mrs. Riley, a widow, who had a similar business on the opposite side of Forest Road. Assisting Mrs. Riley were her two daughters, Clarice and Rene and her son Bill.

Before the show began, and at interval, the proverbial 'lollies and choocs' were dispensed by Bill from the familiar tray suspended from the shoulders by a leather belt.

Mr. Les Tinker, formerly of the Queen's, was appointed Manager of the Strand and subsequently married Miss Clarice Riley. Later, until his death, he was the Secretary-Manager of the Kogarah R.S.L. Club.

Despite the newness and elaborate construction, the Strand never became very popular because, I think, of the noise of trains entering and departing from Hurstville Station which was just outside its walls. By the year 1927 the showing of films at the Strand was confined to Saturday nights and a year later the theatre's use was limited to an occasional stage-play or vaudeville.

In the meantime, the Queen's Theatre had undergone a further reconstruction in 1926 and was re-opened on a particularly wet and windy night, when the proceeds were donated to the St. George District Hospital. It was advertised as "one of the best and largest theatres in the suburbs, with a seating capacity for 2000 patrons. The roof has been raised, thus permitting the erection of a sloping platform for use in lieu of a dress circle" which was formerly lacking, and the installation of more comfortable seating".

The Queen's was now the main Theatre in Hurstville and the Hurstville Picture Palace ceased to be mentioned. Advertising livened up again. When Fred Thompson appeared in "The Tough Boy" we read "...A runaway wagon... a frightened little boy clutching the front seat...the mouth of the railway tunnel...the vehicle bumping down the steep grade into the black maw... the scream of an approaching express-train...the flash of a white horse and desperate rider...a crash within the blackness.. and out streaks a white horse and desperate rider with a boy in his arms...just leaping aside as the limited express roars past". I cannot explain what made "a crash within the blackness" but it is nice to know it ended happily!

Just three years after the previous renovations and alterations, the Queen's was closed, except on Saturday nights, and the programmes were transferred to the Strand. About five months later, in August 1929, the Propeller announced "Hurstville is delighted! It now has one of the finest Talkie Theatres outside of Sydney! On Monday a huge audience welcomed the latest form of popular entertainment with the greatest of enthusiasm at the New Queen's Theatre.

It was a great night for patrons of the Queen's quite apart from the wonderfully fine new feature or element, contributed by the clearly enunciated speech in the moving drama. It was indeed a revelation, a demonstration of the most practical kind, not merely of the progressive

development of this popular place of amusement but of the remarkable increase in population and patronage in and around Hurstville during the past dozen years that has made this effectively and elaborately re-modelled theatre a necessity. About twelve years ago, Illawarra Pictures Ltd. opened on the present site in a comparatively primitive building, not capable of holding more than a third of the number that can now be housed in comfort.

Three years ago the company spent £9000 in extending and improving the premises and about six months ago it was decided to again entirely re-model the building and instal the talkies. The mammoth re-modelling and renovations cost £15000. Seating has been comfortably provided for 3000, including a new dress circle. There is new lighting and the most up-to-date sound system that Western Electric has installed in any suburb".

The boom period introduced by the talkie programmes was followed by the unhappy days of the depression when, perhaps, an occasional outing to the talkies was an escape from the gloom experienced by so many.

Then, as conditions gradually improved, some readers will remember that in the mid-thirties the name of the Queen's was changed to the Civic, and in 1937 a new - and last - theatre, The Savoy, was opened in Ormonde Parade, Hurstville on the site previously occupied by Dr. Cooley. His former home was a large cream-coloured bungalow with sweeping verandahs built well back from the street and surrounded by well-kept gardens and tall palm trees.

The Savoy, when opened, compared favourably with the best city theatres. One attraction was a Wurlitzer Organ, played before the pictures commenced, at interval and while the patrons left the theatre. In between times, the organ and organist disappeared into the depths below.

And now, due to the combined competition of T-V's and Clubs, and the more profitable use that can be made of large former theatre sites, the Savoy has gone. And so, too have the Hurstville Picture Palace, the Strand and the Civic. And also, for that matter, the former theatres in Penshurst, South Hurstville, Ramsgate, Brighton-le-Sands, Arncliffe and Carlton have all been closed or demolished. The only theatres still operating in the district are the Odeon at Rockdale and the Mecca (formerly the Victory) at Kogarah.

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On the day following the typing of the above article, the St. George & Sutherland Shire Leader contained the happy news that the owner of the Kogarah Mecca Theatre, Mr. Phillip Doyle, had purchased the Savoy site and intended to renovate the theatre at a cost of \$200 000.

While the work is proceeding, the theatre will be open in the Christmas school holidays and a Walt Disney film will be screened. The official opening will be early in the new year when the restoration is complete.

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