



# THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

F E B R U A R Y

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The Kogarah Historical Society meets on the Second Floor of the Civic Centre,  
Belgrave Street, Kogarah, on the second Thursday in each month.

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#### OUR FEBRUARY MEETING.

Our next meeting will be held at 8 p.m. on Thursday, 13th February on the second floor of the Civic Centre, Belgrave Street, Kogarah. We are happy to again have Mrs. Betty Goodger as our Speaker. Mrs. Goodger is the Vice-President of the Bankstown Historical Society and is a Librarian at the Mitchell Library. It is appropriate, therefore, that the title to her talk is "An introduction to the Mitchell Library". The talk will be illustrated with slides.

The Raffle Prize will be donated by Mrs. Johns.

Ladies on Supper Roster are Miss Harry and Mrs. Johnson.

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#### GENERAL MEETING IN MARCH - AND ELECTION.

As we mentioned in the January Newsletter, we would like to receive nominations for those seeking election as office bearers and members of the committee not later than 26th February. Of course, the person nominated must give consent thereto.

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#### SOCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Hunter Valley Tour - Saturday, 1st March.  
There are now only five seats at \$10.50 each left for this attractive tour, details of which were set out in our January Newsletter. Leaving the Civic Centre at 7.30 a.m. and returning at approximately 8.30 p.m. we should have a lovely day, and if you would like to come, please be sure to book at the February meeting, when we would like to receive a deposit of \$4.00 on each seat.

Sylvia Kelly.

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#### MUSEUM COMMITTEE REPORT.

At the Society's meeting in January, an outline was given for the basic ideas of construction and presentation of what should be the most comprehensive display of all, in the Carss' Cottage Museum. That is, the chronological history of the development of many aspects of human interest and endeavour, contributing to the changing scene in the Municipality of Kogarah, from the time of its aboriginal inhabitants and early pioneer settlers, to more recent times and events in the twentieth century.

Special exhibits, will be arranged for subjects of importance, where we are able to obtain suitable display material, and two of these are well under way.

The first to be set up is the "Post Office and its services" and the second will relate to many forms of "Transport" including railway, tramways, road and river services, for passengers, and for goods of many kinds.

Photographs provide the basic material for these projects, and the need of more of these is always present. Many old photographs, seemingly unimportant, can often provide much information for members doing research on various subjects, so please bring along to our meetings any you may come across. They will be appreciated very much and if you wish, can be copied, and the original returned to you.

A number of visitors to the Museum in recent weeks have been living in the district for many years and would welcome the opportunity for an interview with one of our members. The names of these people are passed on by attendants, and much valuable information is often gained when a visit can be arranged by one of our enthusiastic research workers.

Many relatives of the English family continue to come along on Sundays, to the Museum, and this month two grand-daughters of John English, enjoyed their visit, and donated a Christmas Card, printed for Mr. and Mrs. John English in 1912, and a newspaper clipping, referring to the unveiling of a monument to John English (late Lord Mayor of Sydney) erected by the citizens of this city, at Waverley Cemetery.

Mrs. Hague, of Brighton also visited the Museum and donated a baby's gown, seventy two years old, and we wish to express our thanks to these ladies for their gifts, and their interest in the Museum.

Plans to open Carss' Cottage each afternoon and evening for one week are progressing. However, the date has been changed, to allow sufficient time to organise our new displays, and Monday 28th April will probably be the opening day, continuing through to Sunday the 4th May. We hope to have many volunteer attendants, for a few hours, day or evening, and if transport is needed we will help in that regard. Please let us know if you would like to assist during "open week".

Financially speaking, January has been a really good start for 1975.

Entrance Fees for the month	-----	\$39.75
Jam Sales	-----	45.20
Books, Postcards and View Folders	-----	6.90
Cedric Emanuel Framed Prints	-----	9.00
Sale of Bark Pictures (by Gwen Coxhead)---		28.25
Pottery Sales	-----	<u>13.50</u>
Gross Takings --		\$192.60

#### Museum Roster.

February	9th	-----	Mr. & Mrs. E. Schweikert
"	16th	-----	Mrs. Butters and Mrs. E. Aiken
"	23rd	-----	Mr. and Mrs. J. Lean
March	2nd	-----	Mrs. D. Diment and Miss P. Diment
"	9th	-----	Mrs. G. Johns and Mrs. G. Taylor
"	16th	-----	Mrs. A. McOnie and Miss M. Boley
"	23rd	-----	Mrs. J. James and Miss D. McLean.

(If date given is inconvenient, please  
contact me as soon as possible - Phone 57-5940)

Gwen Lean.

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#### LIBRARY REPORT.

The following items have been received at the Museum during the last month --  
\* "The Big Show" by Gilbert Mant, published by Horwitz Publications, Sydney, 1972. This book has been kindly donated to our Library by Mr. D. Denham, Publicity Officer of the Royal Agricultural Society.

This book tells the story of the Royal Agricultural Society of New South Wales and its showpiece, Sydney's Royal Easter Show.

The story begins 150 years ago when a group of gentlemen farmers, merchants and others met in Sydney to form Australia's first Agricultural Society. It tells of the Society's early struggles and vicissitudes, and follows events to the present day.

The book is well documented and is profusely illustrated by colour and black and white photographs.

\* December Bulletin of the National Trust of Australia (N.S.W.).

In this issue a report is given on the Trust's plan to regenerate Parramatta River. First a survey was made of the River and from this a map was prepared indicating the types of trees which would most effectively enhance the appearance of the stream.

The success of the venture depends upon the support of the manufacturing and commercial interests who occupy large sections of the foreshore. It is reported that many of these riverside industries have pledged their support for the plan and several have started on tree-planting programmes to screen unsightly buildings from the river.

\* December Bulletin of the St. George Historical Society.

Two articles have been presented in this issue. Mr. Bill Napper supplied a list of historical events in the St. George District between 1839 and 1927. The second article "The Hamlet of Laughtondale" by Gifford Eardley, relates the history of this small settlement situated on the banks of the Hawkesbury.

\* January issue of the Sutherland Shire Historical Society.

This Bulletin contains fifteen articles covering a wide variety of topics and interspersed with historical tidbits. One of the most interesting items is based on a report by R.C. Walker compiled in January and April 1863. Walker was an attorney who was Thomas Holt's agent while he was on a visit to England.

\* December issue of the Hurstville Historical Society's Newsletter.

The article in this issue is entitled "Pioneers of Kingsgrove" and was prepared by Miss M. Brown from family records and "The Propeller".

The item is centred around the Evans family and the Smithson family. Evan Evans purchased 12 acres at Lords Forest facing what is now Kingsgrove Road and extending from near Stoney Creek Road down towards the present Kingsgrove shopping centre. On this site Evans opened a hotel "The Man of Kent".

The second family, the Smithson's came to Australia in 1852 and in 1854 purchased a property in Stoney Creek Road, now Kingsgrove Park, next to the Bexley Golf Links.

The Smithson and Evans families were linked by the marriage of Thomas Gawthorpe Smithson to Maria Harriett Evans. Some of the Smithson family became contractors. Their work included Thomas Holt's Mansion at Sylvania.

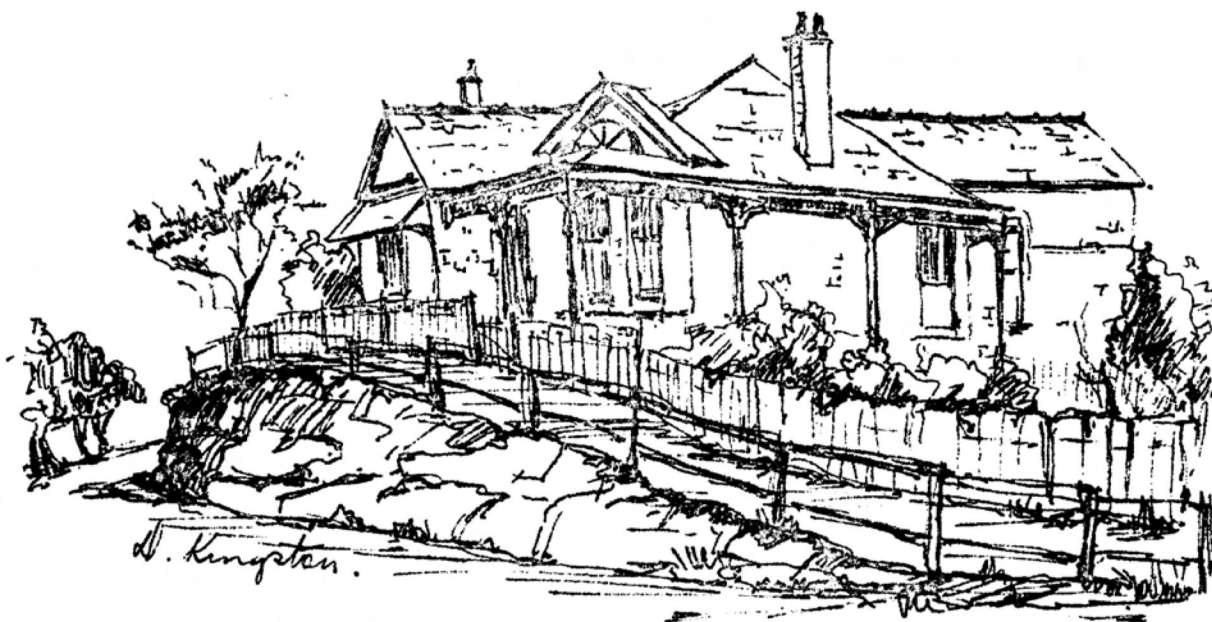
Colleen McEwen.

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A MARKET SURVEY - AND OUR SOCIETY BENEFITS!

Carrs' Cottage has been the venue for many types of gatherings in the past. We have had barbecues, wine-tastings, lectures, work evenings, meetings and all the usual activities of the Society. However, on Monday evening the 20th January we had something a little different.

The Society was offered the opportunity to participate in a market survey conducted by an advertising company. On rather short notice we were able to muster thirteen gentlemen who were willing to take part in a discussion on shaving. As a result of their participation, the Society received \$130.00 which everyone would agree is a most pleasing result. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those who took part in the discussion, particularly those who are not members of the Society. These gentlemen gave up their time without reward so that the Society would benefit. .... J.Veness.



To illustrate the following article, Mrs. D. Kingston has kindly drawn, from a photograph, this picture of "Highworth", old Woniara Road, Tom Ugly's Point

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Pioneers of Shipwright's Bay.

THE WILLIAM J. J. MILDWATER FAMILY

BY M. GRIEVE

In this story of William J. J. Mildwater, who was one of the early settlers who came to Shipwright's Bay, the dates and other details were kindly furnished by his grand-daughter, Louisa Ellen Mildwater, who is now Mrs. Freshwater.

The said William J. J. Mildwater was born in 1843 and died in 1923. He married Louisa Garner in 1866 and her new father-in-law was quite generous with regard to a wedding gift to the young Bride and presented her with a water-front block of land at Manly. There, the newly-married couple built their home and the young husband made a comfortable living as a professional fisherman.

Everything augured well for a halcyon life by the unpolluted waters at Manly but fate, in the form of the Port Jackson Steam Ship Company, stepped in and spoiled "the noiseless tenor of their way". The company needed that particular site on which to build a wharf and after much haggling and bargaining the sale of the house and land was finalised. Mr. Mildwater invested some of the proceeds of the sale and then looked for another waterfront block. This time he went further afield and settled for land on the old Woniora Road (now Princes Highway) a short distance back from the Seabreeze Hotel at Tom Ugly's Point. Here he built a substantial brick residence on the high western side of the road, facing Sans Souci, and overlooking both Kogarah Bay and Shipwright's Bay.

The view from the front and back was breathtakingly beautiful. From the front could be seen the headlands of Botany Bay, the sandy beaches on the foreshores of the Georges River and, way beyond, the great Pacific Ocean. From the back, looking across Shipwright's Bay, the outline of the silvery river could be traced as it wound its way through the wooded hills from Como and beyond.

The new home was named "Highworth" after the town of Wiltshire in England from which the Garner family emigrated when Louisa was only seven years old. The name "Garner" is perpetuated by Garner's Avenue in Marrickville, where the family first settled.

On the Georges River Mr. Mildwater resumed his occupation as a fisherman and achieved fame as a shark-catcher. His method of luring these finny monsters from the deep was unique. In an ingenious manner he rigged a line, with hook and bait to a buoy some distance from the pier. Then, when the bait was taken, the strain on the line caused a bell to ring on the pier and this was the signal for William J. J. to rush to the scene of action. It was just another version of "for whom the bell tolls" with a slight difference. His main reason for adopting this unusual hobby was to help make it safer for people who swam in the river without having the protection of enclosed baths.

It was fortunate that Mr. Mildwater could not foresee that his second home would also be taken by another. This time it was the Main Roads Board which was the culprit but luckily, the Board did not desire to resume the land for road-widening until after Mr. Mildwater's death. Louisa was then quite elderly and the Board agreed to her request that she be allowed to remain in the house for the remainder of her life.

At one time Robert Mildwater, a son of William J. J., conducted a small store next door to his parents' home. From here he dispensed oysters, light refreshments, soft drinks, etc. to picnickers who came up from the popular Woniora Pleasure Grounds which were situated at the rear of Cook's "Tottenham House" and were bounded by Hatfield Street, Church Street and the foreshores of Shipwright's Bay.

Various organisations, clubs and church groups came to this beautiful riverside resort for picnics at weekends and on public holidays. One such

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group was comprised of German singers and musicians who were members of a company called the Leider Taffel, (meaning Music Board or Music Club). When this group gathered around the old piano in the hall, there was a free musical treat for all. Mr. Ebenezer Addis, who conducted the Picnic Ground, charged an entrance fee of sixpence per horse. As many of the large vehicles (e.g. buses) required five horses to pull them, you may guess it was a very remunerative business.

Later, Robert Mildwater was the proprietor of a boatshed on the opposite side of the road, adjoining Dover Park, and there he plied his trade as a boat-builder and also hired out boats to local fishing enthusiasts - and to the many who came from further afield. One famous visitor, whom Robert frequently had the honour of ferrying across the bay was Sir Henry Parkes. Both men were members of the Kogarah Bay Sailing Club and Parkes always attended with Mildwater, who rowed across the Bay. We have all heard numerous "George Washington slept here" stories but I think there is even a greater number of yarns about Henry Parkes. In those riotous electioneering days the politicians often had to face up to a barrage of eggs, fruit and flour, not to mention verbal attacks. One such incident Henry delighted in re-telling. An interjector shouted "You're two-faced!" Henry asked "Are YOU two-faced?" "No" came the reply. "I thought not" said Henry "otherwise you would have left that one at home".

It was a great calamity for the Robert Mildwater's when fire destroyed their house and boatshed. The whole family watched helplessly as all their possessions, with the exception of the piano, were consumed by the flames. In those days of fuel-fires and kerosene lamps, the risk of fire in timber homes was very great. In later years Robert lived on a boat which he built for himself. His anchorage was in Shipwright's Bay, close to his parent's old home.

So much for that euphonious name 'Mildwater' which conjures up tranquility and peace. There are many of the present generation bearing the names of Mildwater or Freshwater who can claim those fine, upright citizens, Mr. & Mrs. William J. J. Mildwater, as their ancestors.

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JOHN CONCANNON, AN 1854 PIONEER OF KOGARAH

(Contributed to the Hurstville Propeller in 1941)

Far back in the romantic story of Sydney's early settlement, at a time when the colonists had not, as yet, seen the running of the first steam train from Redfern to Parramatta, a hardy pioneer Irishman possessed himself of 40 acres of untamed bushland in the heart of what is now Kogarah, and there, with the aid of his courageous wife, built himself a simple slab hut, with its walls and roof of rough hewn timber. In that remote and lonely spot, beside the rough cart-track that was Rocky Point Road, he cleared for cultivation and commenced his labours as a market gardener. There, in the rich soil, which now sprouts a dense mass of modern cottages, the adventurous settler spread his wide acres of gardens. Around the homestead were paddocks for horses and cattle and beyond all was the natural bush, the playground of opossums, bandicoots and wild pigeon.



Two or three years passed and the place grew into a typical country farm, made picturesque with fruit trees, bee hives, poultry, pigs, cows, horses, slip-rail fencing and other rustic features of a pioneer's "squattage". From the bare rafters of the slab hut's kitchen, hung large sections of ham, cured and smoked by the Irishman himself, while at meal times the table was graced with rich home-made bread. Then into that pleasant rural setting, in the distant year 1858 a daughter was born to those hardy pioneers; a daughter, remarkable to relate, who was destined to spend no fewer than eighty-three years of her life in the same district of Kogarah.

The Irishman of whom I write was John Concannon, one of the original pioneers of St. George. He hailed from County Galway in the Emerald Isle. His daughter, now in her 84th year, is best known today as Mrs. E. Hickey, widow of the late Michael Hickey of Kogarah, who once drove the Royal Mail horse-drawn coach from there to the city.

Recently, I had the privilege of a most interesting interview with the grand old lady in her home in Garden Street, Kogarah, where she resides with her daughter, Mrs. M. Allen. Mrs. Hickey is a great-grandmother, counting among her descendants four children (only two of whom are now living), eleven grandchildren and six great-grandchildren.

Not only has this Kogarah octogerarian watched the growth of her own family, but she has also witnessed the gradual opening-up and construction of our modern local suburbs - and in this can relate many interesting and little-known facts about the history of the district. Indeed, her rich and vivid memories of a pioneering past that bears such strong contrasts with the present are today some of Mrs. Hickey's most treasured possessions, and she never tires of re-telling her story of other times to those that are interested.

Naturally enough, some of the incidents that stand out most in Mrs. Hickey's memory are those associated with her happy childhood on her father's big farm eighty long years ago, spread between Kogarah Road (now Princes Highway) and Rocky Point Road. The main frontage of John Concannon's estate, which he purchased in 1854, extended from the junction of those two roads, near one corner of what is now Moorefield Racecourse, right along Rocky Point Road and over Fitzgerald's Hill to as far as Hector Street (in 1975 Jubilee Avenue) which is a considerable portion of a mile towards Ramsgate. In Concannon's day, land could be acquired for about one pound per acre. It is interesting to note that the western side of the modern shopping centre at the foot of Fitzgerald's Hill stands on what was originally portion of Concannon's land. In that locality there was once a street called Concannon Street, but the name has since been changed. (This street is now the eastern portion of Gray Street).

The slab hut which the Irish settler built in the early fifties, stood at the point, facing Rocky Point Road, close to where the trolley buses later turned into the bottom of Gray Street,

Mrs. Hickey mentioned that when she was a child, nothing delighted her more than to stand by the side of the dusty Kogarah Road and, with her young playmates, watch the mobs of sheep or cattle that used to be driven along on their way to the butchers or markets in places nearer the city, such as Newtown. We youngsters would scamper along after the sheep, which were usually in the charge of a veteran drover named Jimmy Justice. Justice worked for the Sutherland Shire pioneer Thomas Holt and he had to fetch Holt's

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mobs of stock from the other side of Georges River by ferrying them over in the hand-worked punt which then served at Tom Ugly's Point seventy and more years ago. Other travellers Mrs. Hickey can remember frequently passing along Kogarah Road, from the direction of the river, were wandering families of aborigines. There were plenty of them about at the time, two prominent warriors being "King Billy" and "Governor."

In questioning Mrs. Hickey about her recollections of the oldest public house in Kogarah, I was interested to hear her comment that the first she can remember, or ever heard of, was Prendergast's Inn. It stood on the Moorefield Racecourse side of Rocky Point Road, right opposite the ruins of Gardener's Arms Hotel. It is to be made clear, however, that the Prendergast's Inn was in use, and pulled down, quite a long time before the Gardener's Arms was built. It is possible that the old inn was one of Kogarah's main buildings between 90 and 100 years ago. In its last days Prendergast's Inn was taken over by a Scotsman named Wilson and conducted as a boarding house for a while.

In those days of Mrs. Hickey's childhood, there were no shops or stores of any description around Kogarah, but an old grocer named Stratton regularly called at her father's home, after driving in his cart all the way from Marrickville. The nearest shopping centre was at Newtown, Mrs. Hickey informed me that the first shop, or rather store, opened in Kogarah, was that established by pioneer John South. It stood on the western side of Rocky Point Road (now Princes Highway) opposite Moorefield Racecourse. An old two-storey residence and bakery and other premises still remain on the same site as mute evidence of Mr. South's early enterprise. Mrs. Hickey commented that in her early days everyone thought that the Kogarah township would develop around the site of South's first store, along the main road, but the coming of the railway, in 1884, changed all that. It is of interest to note that before South opened his shop, the nearest store to Kogarah was at Rockdale. It was conducted by Mrs. Morse and stood beside the main road somewhere between Bay Street and what old hands call Skidmore's Bridge. This shop was there as far back as she can remember. It may have been one of the first stores to have been built on the south of Cook's River.

The first school that Mrs. Hickey attended was that which was established in the little old stone building that still stands at the immediate rear of St. Patrick's R.C. Church at Kogarah. It is one of the oldest of its kind in St. George. On a masonry slab, over the door, are these words: "St. Patrick's R.C. School" - spelt just like that - and the date 1865.

"When I was a girl" said Mrs. Hickey, "there was only a handful of people living around Kogarah and they were scattered so far apart that if you looked out your front gate you would only see the homes of one or two neighbours. At night it was so quiet that you would recognise each settler's dog as it barked in the distance. Most of the people were market gardeners in those times. They were a grand lot of folk, making wonderful neighbours and friends. Some were English families, some Irish and Scots while others were German.

I well remember seeing the gardeners carting their vegetables into the city markets. On each trip they had to pay threepence at the old Cook's River toll bar. When I was about eight years old there was a lot of excitement in the district caused by the Duke of Edinburgh calling in at the Gardener's Arms Hotel as he was on his way to Sandringham, where he stayed at the Prince of Wales Hotel.

Speaking of Sandringham reminds me of another grand old soul of the early days, and this was "Grandma" Selman, who lived down that way. "I remember as clearly as anything" said Mrs. Hickey "how she would make regular calls at our home while on her way to the city. She always wore one of those old-fashioned lace bonnets and a big white shawl. And when she went visiting, Granny Selman would have her personal belongings done up in a big red handkerchief".

In commenting upon other pioneers, Mrs. Hickey made special mention of a Mr. Manego, a negro gentleman, who had a market garden along Muddy Creek, Rockdale. His wife was an English woman. They were fine people, good neighbours and widely known. When there was no Minister to preach at the little Wesleyan Chapel in Bay Street, Mr. Manego used to act as lay preacher and conduct the service. I remember him well because he used to do all the pig-killing around the district. All the settlers around Kogarah and Rockdale kept a few pigs in the pioneering days and many cured and smoked their own hams.

In concluding these reminiscences of Mrs. Hickey I would just like to mention that this Kogarah Octogerarian pioneer has such an excellent memory of her early days that she can even recollect the names of the first two novels that she ever read. With a hearty chuckle Mrs. Hickey declared that they were two "yellow backs", one with a story named "The Doctor's Wife" and the other "Handy Andy". When she was a young lady these novels had a bad reputation and her father had expressly forbidden her to ever read such "trash". However, a neighbouring settler living opposite the Gardeners' Arms Hotel, had procured these two "terrible" books for his wife to read and quite unknown to her father she, as a young lady, absorbed their exciting contents. Now-a-days, these same stories would probably be considered just too dry and mid-Victorian.

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