



# THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

## NEWSLETTER

J U L Y

1975

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THE KOGARAH HISTORICAL SOCIETY

(Sponsored by Kogarah Municipal Council)

President:  
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Hon. Secretary:  
Mrs. N. 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 on 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 1 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 the second floor of the Civic Centre at 8 p.m. on Thursday, 10th July.

The Subject selected by our Speaker, Mr. Charles Gilbert is "Some Notable Australian Women". Mr. Gilbert is a Member of our Society and for International Women's Year his Address is most appropriate.

The ladies on Supper Roster are Mrs. Diment and Mrs. Miller.

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#### SOCIAL SECRETARY'S REPORT.

Our visit to Snapper Island was enjoyed by everyone - what an interesting Museum it was, and we were pleased to meet Commander Forsythe again.

The Bus for our day out at Parramatta is filling rapidly so get your name on the list. The coach leaves the Civic Centre at 10 a.m. July 27th. The cost is \$1.50 and there will be further charges for inspection of the Court House, etc. for those who wish to do so. Picnic lunch as usual.

Will the ladies of the Social Committee please note that we will meet in the Supper Room at the Civic Centre at 7.30 p.m. on the night of the August Meeting (August 14th).

Bookings are open for President's Night - August 28th - and the Tulip Tour - October 12th -- also keep in mind our Street Stall - October 24th. Help will be appreciated on this day as well as goods to sell.

Sylvia Kelly.

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#### MUSEUM COMMITTEE REPORT.

When members of our Society visited Snapper Island Museum on the 1st June, we were given, as a souvenir, a copy of "Open Sea" for our library at Carss' Cottage.

This publication is the official organ of the H.M.A.S. Tingara Old Boys' Association. The booklet we received is Volume 2 No. 12, December 1969, containing much interesting reading, which includes the announcement of plans for the Maritime Exposition 1970, as part of the Captain Cook Bi-Centenary Celebrations. There are informative articles on naval events during World Wars 1 and 2, also comments on the conditions of life at sea in past centuries, and information on the eventual fate of many early sailing ships. There is much more, but perhaps you would like to read it yourself sometime. It is available at Carss' Cottage.

We have also received another donation from Mr. R. Warland, this being a complete set of fourteen volumes of The Popular Encyclopedia, published by Blackie and Sons. No date of printing is given, but it appears to be a new and revised edition of the mid eighteen eighties.

Mr. Hitchcock recently donated, and brought to the Museum, a large, framed portrait of Queen Victoria. This print in delicate colour, with a floral border of pale pink roses, was a complimentary supplement to the Australian Town and Country Journal, as a Christmas gift to Subscribers in 1885. Some restoration to the frame is necessary but the print is most attractive and in good condition.

From Murwillumbah, Mr. A. Carter has sent a donation of horseshoes, a mortise axe, a brush hook and also an old ink bottle. Mrs. Butters kindly brought these gifts to us when she returned from her recent holiday in the north of N.S.W.

We acknowledge all these gifts with appreciation and many thanks to all concerned, for their gifts and their interest in the museum collection.

New displays for the Museum are in preparation, on early industries and various notable citizens of the district, and a number of ideas for improvement in the set-up for the sale of books, etc. are being worked out.

In the Art Centre we are very pleased to have some of Mrs. Grieve's latest paintings. Mrs. Grieve is concentrating on flower studies, mostly of our Australian wildflowers. These, together with paintings and sketches by another member, Mrs. Daphne Kingston, of early homes in the Kogarah district, provide an interesting and colourful selection and very moderately priced.

Any members who would like to add their names to the Museum Roster, for an occasional Sunday, are requested to ring me, or contact me at the next Meeting. Your assistance will be appreciated.

Gwen Lean.

Museum Roster.

|        |      |    |                                   |
|--------|------|----|-----------------------------------|
| July   | 6th  | -- | Mrs. D. Hatton and Mrs. M. Grieve |
| "      | 13th | -- | Mrs. G. Johns and Mrs. G. Taylor  |
| "      | 20th | -- | Miss D. MacLean and Mrs. J. James |
| "      | 27th | -- | Mr. and Mrs. R. Holmes            |
| August | 3rd  | -- | Mr. and Mrs. J. Lean              |
| "      | 10th | -- | Mrs. S. Kelly and Mrs. E. McIlroy |
| "      | 17th | -- | Mr. and Mrs. R. Diment            |
| "      | 24th | -- | Mrs. A. McOnie and Miss M. Foley  |

Roster for Opening and Closing Museum.

|        |      |    |                |
|--------|------|----|----------------|
| July   | 20th | -- | Mr. W. Wright  |
| "      | 27th | -- | Miss C. McEwen |
| August | 17th | -- | Mr. J. Veness  |
| "      | 24th | -- | Mr. J. Lean    |

(Please 'phone me (57-5940) if date is inconvenient and an alternative will be arranged).

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT ON SNAPPER ISLAND TRIP.

On Sunday 1st June, some 50 members of the Society visited the Snapper Island Museum and Training Depot.

The weather was kind to us in that while we saw no sun we were not worried by rain.

By bus to Elliott Street Wharf at Balmain where we were picked up by launch and delivered safely to the Island.

The Training Depot was established some 40 years ago by Commander L. E. Forsythe for the purpose of training young lads in naval discipline. Since its inception some 3000 boys have passed through, many continuing on into the Naval Services.

Throughout the years a unique collection of emblems, models, penants and other items relating particularly to ships of the Australian Navies and many others as well has been assembled.

Within the time available to us it was impossible to absorb all the wealth of information which was on display. Our Guides were most courteous and helpful and contributed to the enjoyment of the day.

The return Launch trip to the wharf was uneventful and all who travelled with us felt that it was a pity that so little is known and appreciated of the reaches of the Harbour, Parramatta and Lane Cove Rivers.

At sometime in the future we must make a trip on the Harbour to rediscover its beauties and look again at history on our doorstep.

JEFF VENESE.

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#### NEWSPAPER ARTICLES REPRINTED IN THIS NEWSLETTER.

During our research, we occasionally come across newspaper articles which contain information that would probably be of interest to our Members. However such articles are spread thinly through many newspaper volumes - over a period of more than one hundred years - and unless we re-print them in our Newsletter, it is most unlikely that they will ever be seen by Members.

This month we have selected two such articles, both relating to Mill Creek, a stream which enters Georges River on its southern side, just a little up past Alford's point - between that Point and Parkesville.

The first article comprises a first-hand description, which appeared in The St. George Call in 1907, of a row up the River, in the 1860's, and a meeting with Bidy Giles. Bidy was an aborigine woman whose photograph is displayed in our Museum in the company of four aborigine men, sitting outside a tent at Sans Souci. The photograph was taken by the Carlton photographer James Robinson, probably in the 1880's.

Regarding Bidy Giles, a 1904 edition of The St. George Call states that "a former wife of King Kooma and, surviving him, she married an Englishman, named Giles in about 1858. They lived at Mill Creek on a property belonging to Dr. Alexander Cuthill....The means of subsistence of the Giles family was wild honey and oysters. They had a pack of dogs and a well-known Port Hacking resident, who remembers Bidy, declares that on one of his occasional visits, the dogs were so poor that they had to lean against a tree to bark".

"The Moons", mentioned in the article, comprise Little Moon Bay, Moon Point and Greater Moon Bay which are nearly a mile up-river from Lugarno, on the opposite side and  $\frac{3}{4}$ -mile before reaching Alford's Point.

As I write, I have before me two photographs, taken about 1900 from the vicinity of the Moons and showing long stretches of the River in each direction. On the densely wooded shores there is not a sign of even one building of any kind. One can imagine what a peaceful scene it must have been in the 1860's.

The second article appeared in the Hurstville Propeller and is a description of a photograph furnished by the late Mr. Richard H. Lewis of Plimsoll Street, Sans Souci and taken by him at Mill Creek in about 1900.

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Mr. Lewis was a friend of mine who retired in 1942 from the position of Officer-in-Charge of the Deeds Branch of the Department of Lands. He was born in Woolloomooloo when that was a better-class suburb in 1879, and moved with his parents to Sans Souci in 1889. He was a fellow-member of The Jolly Rovers Social Club (see March 1975 Newsletter). How I wish that I'd then been interested in Local History. We might have had our own copy of that photo!

It is sad to recall that while viewing a motion picture in a city picture theatre, Mr. Lewis was fatally attacked with an axe by a mentally deranged stranger.

V. S. S.

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UP THE GEORGES RIVER IN THE 1860's.

Extracted from The St. George Call, 1907.

One bright Sunday morning nearly 40 years ago I was one of a party of six young people who started from the Kogarah Bay for an excursion up George's River to Mill Creek, a tributary upon which Billy Giles had established his home.

Custom has not altered in some respects since those days, for each sex had equal representation in our little party, and after a pleasant row of about two hours up stream we landed at the Moon - about a mile above the old punt. The still climb up the hill at the back of the Moon is no small undertaking, and we had to use all our powers of persuasion to get the ladies to face the task. They at length decided to put their faith in their escort, and then began an exciting climb up a steep wallaby track for several hundred feet - in some parts the cliffs which had to be negotiated being almost perpendicular.

When we arrived at the top - which we eventually succeeded in doing--our first thoughts naturally were for a rest, and we took up a position on a large rock overlooking the river. All our trials were speedily forgotten, and we felt that our strenuous efforts in making the ascent were fully rewarded, as we gazed upon the magnificent spectacle which met our view. From our lofty perch the winding river hundreds of feet below seemed almost straight beneath us, and its blue water sparkled like myriads of diamonds in the glorious morning sunbeams. The masses of white blossom which adorned the blood red trees on the adjacent hills gave the impression that they were covered with snow, whilst the wide expanse of landscape which came within the range of our vision both up and down the river formed a picture the beauty of which is far beyond my powers of description. This was Nature in one of her loveliest aspects, and we, the representatives of a civilization which may later and even copy, but never improve upon the work of nature, could only gaze and marvel at the beauty of our surroundings.

After a much-needed rest we resumed our journey across the ridge. By following a track and turning down a small gully, we shortened our journey by about 3 miles to Mill-Creek -- where we arrived after about half-an-hour's walk. We now had the creek to cross, but in response to our "coo-ee", old Biddy - Billy Giles' aboriginal wife - made her appearance with a boat. After according us a friendly greeting, the dusky lady strictly impressed upon us the necessity of being very careful in getting into the boat so as not to damage it - "'cos the ole man would grumble". Probably she feared that we would disturb the lining of the craft, which consisted of a sheet of stringy bark. However, we were paddled across the creek without accident, and the old woman led the way to her home.

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Here we were received by old Billy Giles and two young half castes - Billy and Louie -- two waifs who had found a home and were kindly treated beneath Old Billy's hospitable roof. The house was a two-roomed slab structure, and was kept in a clean and tidy state. A small herd of goats roamed on the hillside, and on the flat were a number of quince trees loaded down with fruit.

Our dusky friends insisted on our dining at their table, and as this was the first time we had had the honor of being invited to dine with Royalty -- (Old Biddy was, I believe, a princess of the Wollongong tribe) - we accepted with due humility. The menu though plain, was plentiful, consisting of damper and baked quinces -- the latter without sugar. The Prince Consort remarked that sugar with baked quinces made people too fat and too hot in summer time. Our beverage was tea with a liberal supply of goat's milk, but some of our party did not appear to make a very hearty meal.

Some of the travellers spent the afternoon listening to old Billy's yarns -- a very profitable way of putting in the time. The others undeterred by their previous pedestrian efforts went hunting, and towards evening returned with their game, amongst which was a native bear, which they presented to old Biddy. The old woman was much pleased with the present and to the amusement of her visitors remarked in quite a sympathetic tone "Poor ting, him smell likit natif roses".

As it was now getting late we bid farewell to our hosts, and recrossed the Moon hill to our boat. A strong ebb tide enabled us to drift leisurely down the river to Kogarah Bay, and we arrived home tired and hungry, but full of pleasant recollections of our day's outing in the wilds.

As I look back now it does not seem as though such a flood of years has passed since I took part in that memorable trip. In the years which have intervened the old home of Billy Giles and his mate has disappeared, Mill Creek has been deserted and three of the six who went forth in the glory of their youth that day are sleeping quietly the sleep which comes "when life's fitful fever is o'er". Poor Billy Giles and Biddy and Louie have also gone, so that but four of the ten who dined beneath their roof on that memorable occasion remain. I have not seen the three, who with myself constitute the survivors of the party, for a good many years, but doubtless if they see this account of our trip, it will recall a very happy experience of their youthful days.

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#### AN OLD WATER-MILL ON MILL CREEK

(by "Father Time" in the Hurstville Propeller)

From Mr. R. H. Lewis of Sans Souci, who has been a local resident since before the turn of the century, I have had the pleasure of receiving a most interesting photograph of a pioneer water-mill which stood at one time amid the bush on the banks of Mill Creek not far beyond Menai. In the intervening years, since 1900, this historic ruin has, I believe, entirely disappeared and this makes Mr. Lewis' picture all the more valuable.

Mr. Lewis related to me how he had visited that out-of-the-way spot along Georges River by boat back in the days of his youth and he and his companions made an excursion far up Mill Creek on the higher land, where it was a running fresh-water stream. There they came across the deserted remains of the old mill building. With its high gaunt walls of weathered sandstone it stood like some tomb in a wilderness, its roof long fallen in and without windows or doors.

Except for the small grassy clearing surrounding the ruins, the dense bush appeared on every hand and there was not a house or person within miles.

Just who built the pioneer mill, Mr. Lewsi has never been able to find, but it is thought that it was erected somewhere in the vicinity of the time, in 1840, when the ferry was first run across the river at Lugarno. In fact, it seems very probable that Mill Creek took its name from the presence of the water-mill on its banks.

The photograph taken by Mr. Lewis is remarkably well-preserved, considering the negative was made in 1900. It shows the old mill to be of large size, rectangular in shape, two stories in height and with an attic loft. On the creek side of the building was then unmistakable evidence that this had once been a water-mill with originally a great wheel on the outer wall driven by water troughed from the adjacent stream.

In its useful days, when it ground the grain of pioneer farmers, this mill was quite likely covered by a shingle roof. Who knows, it may even have been built by convicts!

At first sight it may seem very odd that a mill should ever be built in such an outlandish spot and at that time so far from a settlement of any size. But we must remember that in those times, before steam-power came into general usage, water and wind were the main sources of mill power. When it came to the matter of water, just any old creek would not do. Other factors also helped to determine the choice for a water-mill, notably the availability of suitable building material and the presence of reasonably level land beside the stream.

When considering this matter of the old Menai mill it is also of interest and importance to know that there was once another water-driven mill on the banks of Woronora River at the junction of the fresh and salt water, a little westward from the site of Engadine. It was built there, according to historic records, by Mr. John Lucas in about 1825. Today, not a single trace of that place remains.

From my knowledge of the early life and industry of colonial Sydney I am inclined to believe that both of these venerable and now extinct mills had some historic connection with the wheat and other grain which was grown on the pioneer farms of the Bankstown and Liverpool districts.

It was possible that some of the grain grown on the agricultural lands of St. George in the very earliest days may have been ground into flour or meal in those same mills. However, most of what I could say about this obscure subject would be guesswork since the full story of those pioneer enterprises seemingly has been lost for ever in the forgotten passages of our local history.

At the same time I must add that I am particularly grateful to Mr. Lewis for the photographs which he has been kind enough to present to me. So far as I am aware, they are the only pictures in existence of one of the very oldest buildings that ever stood in local districts, and pictures which could not be obtained today under circumstances such as existed in 1900.