

<i>Month & Year of Topic</i>	<i>Topic</i>	<i>Written & Spoken Presenters Speakers?</i>
August 2000	Public Utilities Water Gas Electricity Sewage System Telephones	Frank Keating Norm Butters Jim Douglas Wal Cornish Rayma Papworth Gordon Andrews Glenn Stevens Jane Crane

Copyright Except where material is attributed to an earlier creator, you may copy, distribute, display, download and otherwise freely deal with this work for any purpose, provided that you attribute Oatley Heritage Group as the owner. However, you must obtain permission if you wish to (a) charge others for access to the work or (b) include the work in advertising or a product for sale, or (c) modify the work.

Disclaimer: Some material prepared by the Oatley Heritage Group is based on information provided by its members or others and is intended to be for general information purposes; as to its accuracy, therefore, no warranty is given or implied.

Public Utilities: Water, Gas, Electricity, Sewerage, Phones
Fri. 25th Aug. 2000

History: Russell Gibb.
Norm Butters
Gordon Andrews
Frank Keating
Jim Douglas
Glenn Stevens
Janite Crane
Rayma Papworth.
Wal Cornish
~~4/01~~

(blurb about Wal's talk
typed by C. Crane)

General Meeting - 19th August 2000
"PUBLIC UTILITIES"

(In the absence of any written material on the talk by Wal Cornish on Sewerage Pumping Stations in the Oatley area, the following has been excerpted from the minutes of the meeting recorded by the Group's secretary, Glenn Stevens).

Wal Cornish, who comes from Kogarah, felt he could contribute to our meeting about Public Utilities as he worked on Sewerage Pumping Stations in the Oatley area, particularly around the foreshores of the Georges River.

Wal referred to his first recollection of Oatley as the time when his father took him to Oatley Sandy Beach for swimming carnivals.

Later on his work took him back to Oatley and he proceeded to talk on the hard work of building tunnels and pumping stations. Jewfish Point to the end of Mary Gilmore Road was his first assignment, then on to Gungah Bay Road. Dynamite was used to blast through the rock for the pipes to be put down, then rails were put through these tunnels for work to be carried on inside and on further extensions.

He recalled that he had to put a pumping station at the end of Herbert Street where he made the acquaintance of Mrs. Noela Davis. She avers that the station and the retaining wall are still in working order. Neverfail Bay to Shipwrights Bay at Blakehurst was another tunnel and Pump station he was involved with.

Wal Cornish reminds us that migrants were the workers on these jobs and that the Italians were very helpful as their ancestors were skilled in such undertakings.

He also showed photos taken during that time. He is now retired.

A most interesting and informative talk.

(George Kendall, keeper of the Group's photograph collection, has some photographs which Wal Cornish displayed, and left for the Group's records)

In accordance with the 1919 Local Government Act, the St. George County Council was constituted on 26th October, 1920.

The area to be supplied was that comprising the municipal areas of Rockdale, Kogarah, Bexley and Hurstville, and the members of the Council being aldermen of those councils.

It was agreed that areas would be supplied in conjunction with the electrification of the Illawarra rail line. Using Kogarah Council Chambers as temporary headquarters the four Councils advanced the sum of \$1600 as capital.

In February, 1921, a programme was prepared to reticulate electricity to provide 2000 street lights and 2000 consumer services at a cost of \$198,500, such sum being borrowed and to be paid back once funds were received resulting from such supply.

The County Council's own premises were established in Kogarah, the foundation stone being laid on 9th September, 1922.

Electricity in the County's area commenced at Arncliffe with the necessary poles being delivered by rail.

The poles were delivered to their various installation spots by dray drawn by twelve bullocks. As can be imagined this activity caused quite a stir in local business centres.

In 1923 a "T" model Ford utility together with an Excelsior motor cycle equipped with a box and ladder was purchased. This was followed by several Harley-Davidson motor cycles with sidecars and two Vulcan trucks with solid tyres.

The first consumer of electricity was the Masonic Hall in Montgomery Street, Kogarah and it was switched on at a special banquet on 9th March, 1923.

An article in the Propeller Newspaper of 28th September, 1923 under the heading of "Electricity for Oatley", reads as follows:-

"The various progress associations of Penshurst, Mortdale and Oatley have received the following letter from the St. George County Council:-

"With reference to the proposed extension of the Railway Commissioners' high tension line from Hurstville to Oatley, I am pleased to be able to inform you that the County Council, at its last meeting, decided to proceed no further with the negotiations with the Railway Department, but to construct the high tension line itself. Action has already been taken in the direction of ordering the necessary poles and all the other preliminary arrangements are well in hand, and immediately the poles come to hand the mains will be completed with as little delay as possible. Your association could co-operate with the County Council by pointing out to probable consumers in your particular locality the importance of lodging their applications with the County Council if they desire the service when the mains are available. It is surprising the number of people in the first section who have withheld their applications and, in fact, are still doing so in some cases until the council's mains have been erected in their particular street. By doing so they are acting against their own interests, as the County Council cannot be expected to erect expensive construction along a street unless it has some assurance that applications will be made for connections to the mains. All applications received are filed in streets, and this file is referred to by the engineer when he is determining the streets along which the mains are to be erected, and quite naturally, the streets offering the most business receive attention first. - R.C. Rose, County Clerk."

page 5
A further article in the Propeller of 2nd November, 1923, also under the heading "Electricity for Oatley" and a sub-heading "Current Available Shortly" reads as follows:-

"A rumour is current in the Oatley district that the County Council have not the funds to carry out the second section of the electric light installation owing to the number of extra lights and services which have been added to the first, or already lighted, section. This is a misleading statement, and should be contradicted by the representatives on the board of the County Council. No extra poles or mains have been added in this section over and above the quota of the original plan, which have been a charge upon the loan funds. In every case this expense has been borne by the component councils, who have applied for them. The sole reason for the delay of reticulating the current to this area has been caused by the alteration in the Railway Department's scheme of conveying the current to Como, thence to Sutherland. The County Council is now awaiting the arrival of the special poles to convey the high tension mains via Hillcrest Avenue and Railway Parade to Oatley. The cause of delay is stated to be the inability of bush workers to get the poles to the depots owing to the bad state of the tracks on account of the recent wet weather in the country. The erection of the poles for the supply mains is a very trivial matter. The whole of them on the original plan can be erected within two months, and with the modern appliances in use by the contractors, the cables can be laid at the rate of about five miles per day. It is rather a pity that so many pessimists can be found to condemn co-operative work. If the matter were in the hands of a private concern these persons might find just cause for complaint when they receive the bill of costs. The County Council's contractors have five years in which to finish the work, of which only $2\frac{1}{2}$ years have gone, and two-thirds of the work has been accomplished. Saywells Limited, who have been supplying portion of Rockdale and Brighton-le-Sands, are closing down early next month, and every endeavour is being made to have this section ready so that no inconvenience will be caused to the consumers already on the mains of this company."

In a 1932 report of the County Council much was said of the free service given to consumers with the object of encouraging the use of electricity for all domestic purposes. Prompt attendance was a must at consumers' premises, inspections of installations were free of charge and payment for service to appliances was to be only for material or parts used.

A 1937 report showed, amongst other things, electricity prices :-

Domestic lighting	- $3\frac{1}{2}$ pence per unit
Domestic power	- $\frac{7}{10}$ of a penny per unit.

somewhat different these days.

High voltage electricity was supplied to St. George County Council by the Department of Railways until 1955 when it was transferred to the Electricity Commission of N.S.W.

In later years, of course, the Council was amalgamated with the Sydney County Council and electricity is now supplied by its successor, Energy Australia.

MEETING HELD ON THE 25th AUGUST, ~~1980~~ ²⁰⁰⁰

----- the Growth of Public Utilities -----

WATER.: Prior to about 1820 the supply of water to Sydney was from the TANKy Stream and in 1837 a tunnel knwn as the BUSby Bore was completed between what in is now Centennial Park and the town of Sydney. As time moved on various catchment areas were developed such as the Nepean River and the Woronora River.

GAS : The expansion of New South Wales in the years following the departure of Governor Macquarie early in 1822 has been for many years an interesting theme for discussion, particularly the discovery of Gold and the rapid growth in public utilities. Between 1820 and 1851 the town of Sydney had extended in a number of directions. Its physical limits had been defined and a number of suburbs had been established . Brick homes were being built and such things as Gas: Water and Electricity and mail Communication systems wer being developed .

On the evening of Friday, April 7th 1826, the first street lamp was lit by OIL in Macquarie Place . On the next day , the "Sydney Gazette" said " we hope that in 12 months -----the Australian Metropolis will be rendered still more brilliant by the use of Gas Lighting". This hope remained unfulfilled. Gas lighting remained a thing for the future, and it was not until the various problems wer overcome , such as a regular supply of Coal, a suitable palce for the manufacture of Gas the ready supply to points of etc. that task of Gas lighting was complete. One the 24th May, 1841 . in honour of Queen Victorias birthday the first night of Gas Lighting was set. There were some setbacks, but I feel that this was the day we can say Gas Light came to Sydney.

ELECTRICITY: Although some experiments with electricity were carried out in Sydney as early as 1860, and it was first used commercially in 1878 ^{THE 172} it was not until the last years of the nineteenth century that ~~that~~ was any significant development. Many country Municipal Councils were generating power . The Dept. of Railways had a power station at Ultimo which was opened in 1899. The Sydney Electric Lighting Act 1896 inaugurated its Power Supply Authority in 1902 and later erected a power staion at Pymont. It is not within the time frame of this meeting to develop the growth of Electricity, and indeed this will be covered by other speakers For 23 years after the settlement of N.S.W there were no regular post offices in operation. On the 23rd June 1810 Gov. Macquarie authorised Isaac Nichols to handle local correspondence and he was later officially appointed as postmaster. The first telgraph line was opened between Sydney and South Head on 26th January 1858.

POST and TELEPHONE

*Water**Norm Butters*

THE CONSTRUCTION OF WORONORA DAM WAS FIRST DISCUSSED IN 1906. NOTHING MORE WAS DONE UNTIL 1930 WHEN WORK WAS STARTED AND A WALL BUILT TO A HEIGHT OF 45 FEET. THIS WAS FINISHED IN MARCH 1931. WORK WAS THEN CLOSED DOWN OWING TO LACK OF FUNDS. THE RE-OPENING OF THE WORK WAS RECOMMENDED IN APRIL 1935 WITH A VIEW TO COMPLETION BY 1939. THE BOARD THEN DECIDED TO RE-COMMENCE WORK WITH A VIEW TO COMPLETING THE DAM IN 1940 AND THE PIPELINE IN 1942. IN JULY 1936 THE DIAMETER OF THE PIPELINE WAS INCREASED TO 48" AND IT WAS DECIDED TO BUILD THE DAM TO A HEIGHT OF 200 FEET. THE DAM WAS COMPLETED TO FULL SUPPLY LEVEL IN OCTOBER 1941. WHEN FIRST CONSTRUCTED THE PRIMARY FUNCTION OF THE PIPELINE WAS TO CONVEY WATER FROM WORONORA DAM TO THE PENSHURST RESERVOIR. THE INTENTION WAS TO EXTEND IT TO WATERLOO BUT AS SUTHERLAND SHIRE GREW THE FUNCTION OF THE PIPELINE WAS NOW TO SUPPLY SUHERLAND, CRONULLA, HEATHCOTE, ENGADINE, STANWELL PARK, AND AREAS JUST NORTH OF THE GEORGES RIVER.

AT THE SOUTHERN END OF THE RAILWAY BRIDGE CROSSING THE GEORGES RIVER THE 48" MAIN IS DIVIDED INTO TWO 24" MAINS WHICH ARE CARRIED ACROSS THE RIVER ON BRACKETS WELDED TO THE BRIDGE. AFTER CROSSING THE RIVER THE MAIN REVERTS TO 48" DIAMETER AND FOLLOWS THE EASTERN SIDE OF THE RAILWAY LINE TO OATLEY WHERE IT DEVIATES ALONG STREETS TO THE INTERSECTION OF HILLCREST AVENUE AND LAYCOCK ROAD WHERE A 36" BRANCH RUNS TO PENSHURST RESERVOIR. IT WAS THEN PROPOSED TO EXTEND THE PIPELINE TO ALLAWAH RESERVOIR.

THE INFORMATION WAS SUPPLIED BY JON BREEN - SYDNEY WATER BOARD ARCHIVES. PHONE 93340238 - 0411436543.

*Norm Butters**25/8/00,*

OATLEY HERITAGE GROUP.

25 AUGUST 2000

PUBLIC UTILITIES - WATER, GAS, ELECTRICITY, SEWERAGE, PHONE.

By way of introduction - my name is Gordon Andrews, an Oatley resident for some 81 years.

My family, with me as an infant, moved to, what is now Llewellyn Street, Gungah Bay in May, 1919. Consequently my recollections will centre mostly on that part of Oatley.

At the time of our arrival the only road servicing Gungah Bay area was Yarran Road which went as far as Silvesters Castle. As a result amenities were few and certainly no public Utilities were available to the residents.

Furniture and the like for our home had to be railed to Como Railway Station and transported by boat to our home.

WATER.- The household water supply was from corrugated iron tanks which collected rainwater through roof top gutter systems. This commodity was precious and people learned to be careful and sparing in its use.

The level of supply was determined by tapping the corrugated rings of the tank with ones knuckles.

On occasions some residents found it necessary to have a water cart called in to supplement supplies.

Town water became available only with the completion of the road system in the area.

SEWERAGE. Toilets were located far removed from the residence with the toilet receptacle usually being a 4 gallon kerosene tin (commonly in use for lighting and heating) the contents being buried regularly in a convenient spot in the garden.

Toilet paper, as we know it to-day, was unknown and consisted of newspaper squares strung by string to a nail on the wall.

With the construction of roads - Waratah Street (Now Boorara Avenue) and Llewellyn Street in the middle to late 1920's (?) the night-cart system was introduced and continued right up to the modern sewerage, a relatively recent installation.

GAS. My early recollection was of gas lighting and heating being available in central Oatley. The railway station was lit by gas and some street lighting was installed with the necessity of a nightly visit by the lamplighter and, I assume, a morning visit to turn the lighting off.

My Grandparents shop and dwelling on the corner of Waratah Street and Wonoona Parade West had gas lighting and heating as far back as I remember. I therefore presume that gas installation in that area was sometime before the 1920's.

ELECTRICITY. Until the middle to late part of the 1920's home lighting was by kerosene lamps or pressure lights.

Cooking was with fuel stove stoked with wood gathered locally by we boys after school each day - also used for cooking was the primus stove.

I have vivid memories of the installation of electricity with poles brought in by bullock teams - an exciting experience. The early days of electricity were uncertain with regular blackouts - we schoolboys often had a blackout as an excuse for incomplete homework.

One thing worth recording was the method of changing street light globes - broken or burnt out. The man attending the job climbed the pole by using rope and stirrups - no ladder - unacceptable, I am sure, in this day and age.

Hoping these rambling recollections will stir memories for some and perhaps, in some small way, an insight into early Oatley for others.

GORDON ANDREWS.

JIM DOUGLAS

70 ALGERNON ST.
OATLEY
N.S.W. 2223
AUSTRALIA

5th May 2000

Dear Glenn

Thank you for the invitation to contribute to the next topic for the Heritage Group in August.

I'm sorry to have to say that I'm still not keeping up very well with even everyday affairs and so don't think I'll be able to contribute anything significant to the topic. I do remember that when we came to Oatley in the early 1960s water, gas and electricity were connected. We had the gas disconnected several years later in order to take advantage of the St George County Council's All Electric Rate - something which of course no longer exists. (And in the ceiling of the house there are still the gas pipes for what would have been the gas lights in the rooms, though these were no longer in evidence when we moved in.) Sewerage for the south side of Algernon St wasn't installed until several years later, with the splendid sum of 10 pounds (as I remember) being paid to us by the Water Board to compensate for the construction of a manhole on our property. There was a shortage of telephone lines from the exchange in the 1960s and for a number of years we shared a line with our neighbours on the west side (Frances and Ken Everingham: Frances had grown up in the house at 70 Algernon St).

*

On another matter, at the most recent meeting of the Oatley Flora and Fauna Society I drew attention to the appearance of the Heritage Group's inspired tablet marking the location of the original Oatley railway station. After the meeting I was approached by someone present, to comment that in his view it would be helpful for any other such markers (I'd predicted that there probably would be) to be set back from the footpath with a small paved area in front of them, since while he was standing reading it he felt he was impeding traffic along the footpath. I said I would report his view to the Group - so here it is.

I hope you have a more helpful response from others listed in the participating group, and that on a future occasion I may be able to be more useful.

Sincerely,

Jim S. Douglas

HERITAGE SOCIETY MEETING

24 AUGUST 2000

SPEAKERS:

GORDON ANDREWS – Read Notes

JIM DOUGLASS (Unable to attend – letter read by President)

NORM BUTTERS – Submitted article, read by President

WAL CORNISH – Spoke on sewer around the foreshores

(The following are a few questions and answers during the meeting)

WAL CORNISH (Speaking on the sewer around the foreshores)

Question: What about the back of Marine Drive? A. Yes, that is another one and I was in charge of that one. The tunnel was about there (pointing). I had to connect it from a railway line.

Q. Was it on the shore? A. No, in the rock. The pumping station -----

Q. The big things are on the waterfront? A. Yes, that was pumped to the top of Freeman Avenue. The next one was in Herbert Street. This pumping station was built – we built a stairway to the waterfront and a pumping station to the bottom. There was a retaining wall and I believe it is still there. I have pictures of the work done by the migrants. This one shows that we had to put up copper dams. We had to put a trench in the mud and stand the copper dam on a bearer. You had to be able to work while the tide was in. We had a few collapses. In rough weather the water would push it over. The men who worked on there, they deserved our credit. Everything was done by day labour and people were lined up at Allawah to get a job, etc. (I believe all this is being taped by Glenn). I had 25 years in the Water Board and finished at Malabar.

RAY STEVENS: Q. These little tunnels ----- *at Bungah Bay Rd?* A. A thousand feet long, not little.

Q. Can the men stand up and work? A. You had to crouch down a bit.

Q. If you wanted to come back 100 feet? A. There was a railway line. I had to set up the theodolite about every thirty feet and give them a mark and tell them what level. We met within an inch and half on the line. *and dead level*

Q. Did you suffer from claustrophobia? A. Yes, you would. There were lights and ventilation, so not as bad as you imagine.

DOS WALKER: Q. I was about fourteen and in Mi Mi Street another big tunnel and I walked from there through the tunnel down to Waterfall Road.

A. I think that is the Georges River sub-main about twelve feet and eight feet.

What I do have to impress is that without those migrants, this would never have been done. Some were Italians and I do not know why they did not go broke. The bank manager wanted to know when the progress payments -----

How did they work.

JACK WALKER: Q.(?) A. They had air compressors and air drills. You had to drill holes on the face and put them in the right position and the detonators had to have the right delay; there were millisecond delays and everyone got out and could not go back for half an hour, at least. It took about nine months for this tunnel, and I thought, similar to having a baby "I hope it comes out all right in the end." One of the inspectors said, I think that tunnel is about eight feet to the right where the other tunnel is coming. I said, no it is not. We met within an inch and a half. Thank you.

ELECTRICITY – FRANK KEATING (Read from written notes).

RAY STEVENS: Q. When did the electricity come to Oatley? A. I did not get an actual date.

Q. The train line was 1925? A. I could not find anything on actual dates – started in Arncliffe, and gradually moved to further down.

JAN CRANE: Q. *Trains*-----(?) A. I think it was about 1925 or 1926 – I think twentysix when it came to Oatley.

FRANK KEATING: There were gas lamps on the walls still when I was born.

TELEPHONES – Rayma Papworth (Read from notes)

CHARLIE SMALL: We did not get the phone for quite a while. I had to go to Nurse Newcombe and give her twopence – about 1930.

GEORGE KENDALL: We had the only phone on at the end of Rosa Street, probably after 1922. We were the only people with a phone – I would say mid to late twenties.

OWEN O'BRIEN: I could perhaps throw a little light on early phones in Oatley. My grandfather was a post office store operator to about where John Post has his hardware today; my Mother was an assistant to him – this is about 1911 or 12. They had the telephone on, connected directly to Kogarah – it was 'Kogarah 80'. She would take telegrams on the phone; if it was for someone away in Algernon Street, and if urgent, she would jump on a pony and deliver it. It may be of interest to know that the exchange at Kogarah was connected to the early Post Offices as a direct line and used to transmit telegrams and, unfortunately, she is not here these days to tell me more about *it*, – but there are so many questions we could ask. 'Kogarah 80' was the Oatley Post Office and it was in Oatley Avenue. My grandfather was a John Harrison and my Mother, Jessie Harrison.

RAYMA PAPWORTH: Q. 1909 the first public phone? A. Yes.

Perhaps at the next meeting bring me a slip with names, and I will add it to this. Thank you.

PRESIDENT: We want something on the gaslight.

GEORGE KENDALL: The gas light actually finished in Rosa Street. That would have been in the early thirties, possibly, that light was on at Rosa Street and that was the last light on the peninsula.

PRESIDENT: There was more competition between the gas company and the electric light.

Q. The gas company subdivided land on the condition that you got the gas on.

CHARLIE SMALL: I did some research and my council approved my building plans and specifications on 12 May 1947. Prior to that I had inquired of the gas company when the gas would come on, so included in the specifications is the gas copper 5 pounds 10/-, stove 24 pounds, bath heater 12 pounds 10/- and the gas fire 12 pounds. We did not have the gas until some time in 1951.

OWEN O'BRIEN: I have been asked to move a vote of thanks to those people who presented papers and articles, and I am certain you will agree how informative it has been, and the work put in is really worthwhile, and we have learned something about this. There are so many stories you could all tell me. There is something that Frank mentioned in the wording of the St George County Council Report, it was signed by Rowley Rose, and he was the father of Peg Priestly, and that may be of interest to those in the Bowling Club. May I ask for a vote of acclamation to the people who presented their papers today.

PUBLIC UTILITIESWhen Sewer Came to Oatley.

25 AUGUST 2000

John and I purchased our block of land at Kitchener Street just after WW2 ended (1946-47).

I had lived at Hurstville before our marriage, where we went through the altering of the pan system to sewerage - about 1936. There must have been some upheaval at that time, but I was not too aware of it.

To come to the pan system again was quite a shock for me. So my hopes were high when we were told, 4 years later (1951) that work was about to commence in Oatley. Did we believe it, though? No! Too many rumours that it would come and disappointment when it did not happen. However, this time it was true.

Jackhammers and trucks were heard all day coming closer to our home. When Pop Stevens heard the noise especially the jackhammers, he asked us to let him stay with us during the daytime, as the noise reminded him of WW1. He never really recovered from that war.

There was an Irish foreman working with his men in Kitchener Street and as the work did not progress very quickly because of the peculiarly hard rock in this area, he was heard to say there would be no profit in this job for him.

After the street was finished and people could have connections made, Jim Whitaker was the first to be connected and we became the second house with sewer on. I put a vase of flowers on the cistern for the opening day. The plumber was surprised and delighted! **BERTIE SAUNDERS WAS THE PLUMBER.**

Glenn Stevens

Public Utilities in Oatley.

25th August 2000

When the sewer came to Gungah Bay, Oatley.

I know nothing about the technicalities of services coming to Oatley but our little family was living in the Gungah Bay area when the sewer arrived in the 1960s. I went off to ^{hospital to} have a baby and returned one week later to find a large generator, the size of a mini-bus parked about 7 metres from the front wall of our house. The noise was incredible, so we ^{tried} to persuade the men to move it further away - they just smiled. I wondered how would ^{we} I ever get the baby to sleep?

The first day he cried until 4am the next morning and it was a hearty cry as he had weighed in at well over 9 pounds (4.3k) at birth. Then we discovered that he could sleep through the noise of the generator, but woke up and cried the moment it stopped. Unfortunately, they turned it off several times a day - for morning tea, lunch, afternoon tea and then at the end of the working day. These close downs usually occurred just about an hour after the baby had gone to sleep. As babies were fed and bathed etc. to a strict routine in those days it never entered my head to adjust his timetable to that of the generator. This went on for 9 months.

There was another problem involved. As the work progressed, the great trench deepened outside our house. After school, when the workmen were gone, it attracted hordes of little boys who tried to clamber over the retaining timbers. There were falls and cuts and shrieks of pain each afternoon. Today, there would be safety fences surrounding the work, but not then. It meant forever running to rescue or admonish ^{them}, and ^{making} efforts to send them away. I said they'd be hurt - they scoffed at that. I said their parents would be upset - they didn't care! So I drew on the last card in the pack.

They were told that if they ^{were} killed or maimed it wouldn't worry us. However it would be me who had to clean up all the blood and mess. I didn't want to see their broken bones sticking out through their skin or pick up their torn off ears or find a knocked ^{eye} out staring up at me from the grass. So I'd like them to go home and stop being such a nuisance. They looked at me in horror, as if I were some kind of monster - but it worked, they went away.

Boy

OATLEY HERITAGE GROUPPublic Utilities: TELEPHONES.

25 AUGUST 2000

Researching the subject of telephones in Oatley, I found from the Telecom Historical Museum, that our little 'hamlet' was designated two sentences of information:

*1) 1905 - Telephone Bureau installed for use of Postmaster.
(Normally near Rail Station or Post Office);*

2) 1/7/1909 - Public 'phone was installed . (Probably to replace the Bureau.)

Thus it was, the beginning and the end! I felt though, that this was rather insufficient, so I continued to research, as background material, the history of the telephone in the St. George District. Settlement of this area dates back to the early 1800s making it one of the earliest settled districts in New South Wales. The first post office in the district was established at Kogarah on the 1st August, 1863, for postal business only. This was because the science of telecommunications was only just beginning to make an impact in the Australian colonies.

In 1844 Samuel Morse had made his first successful demonstration of the 'Morse telegraph' through a line from Washington to Baltimore in the United States. Ten years later, in 1854, Australia's first telegraph line opened between Melbourne and Williamstown in Victoria - New South Wales began their telegraph line in 1858, and during the 1860s the network expanded greatly, bridging the gaps between country centres.

The increasing pace of technological development in the second half of the Nineteenth century is aptly demonstrated by the speed with which the use of the telephone spread throughout the world. Within two years of the first successful telephone experiments by Alexander Graham Bell, telephone instruments were being tested in Australia. The network took off in the 1880s, spreading out from centres in the capital cities to suburban and rural areas. In many cases however, the early telephone served as an adjunct to the extensive telegraph network. This was the case in Kogarah Post Office, where a telephone was installed on the 8th January, 1886. It is believed that this telephone, probably the first in the St. George area, was for the exclusive use of the postmaster. A line was

extended to the nearest office equipped with a Morse telegraph instrument, allowing telegrams to be transmitted over the telephone. Many small post offices, lacking Morse equipment and trained operators, were thus able to reap the benefits of the telegraph system through the telephone.

Since 1863 other post offices had been established in the St. George area. Hurstville followed Kogarah, with its own office on 1st October, 1864, under the name of "Gannon's Forest Post Office" - changed to Hurstville on 1st March, 1881. The Rockdale office was next, opened on 15th April, 1882.

The early history of the telephone system in New South Wales is closely bound up with the postal service. As in the case of Kogarah, early telephone connections were often made between post offices before anything like an exchange switching system existed. Telephones were installed at Arncliffe and Hurstville on 8th January, 1886, apparently in connection with Kogarah; and at Rockdale, a little later, on 9th April, 1886. Most of the other post offices in the St. George area were connected by telephone a good deal later:

Kingsgrove - April, 1919; Peakhurst - 20th March, 1909; Blakehurst - 1915. By this time though the exchange network based at Kogarah was well established and developing rapidly, and continued to centre around there. Kogarah Telephone Exchange was the first metropolitan exchange to serve the area south of the Cooks River. With its magneto type manual switchboard it served 28 subscribers when it opened on 1st October, 1896. By 31st December, 1897, there were 41 subscribers connected, and within two years this figure had almost doubled. It did double, for the first time in 1899, and did so again in 1904, 1908, 1912, 1918, 1924 and 1938. In 1899 there were three telephonists employed at Kogarah and by 1914 this number had increased to 19, to serve more than 700 subscribers. Development continued at a rapid pace, exceeding 1000 subscribers in 1919 and 2000 in 1925.

The first public automatic telephone exchange in New South Wales was opened at Newtown in June, 1914. This date marks a crucial point in the history of the N.S.W. telephone network - it began the programme to convert exchanges from manual to automatic systems, which of course today we all enjoy. Kogarah began this process in 1926 and measures were taken to prepare for a totally automatic telephone system in the St. George area. By 1930 there were more than 2400 subscribers connected and the burden on the then exchange was excessive.

The solution was to create a number of new exchanges to reduce the load on Kogarah, and the first of these went into operation in Hurstville in May, 1930, and the second at Rockdale on 2nd November, 1936. Hundreds of lines were detached from Kogarah and converted to automatic service on these new exchanges. As development continued, new automatic exchanges began to spring up all around the area - Ramsgate in October, 1948, Kingsgrove in November, 1950, Peakhurst in December 1951, and Blakehurst in December, 1952.

In the 1960s a new generation of exchange technology was introduced into the Australian network. Known as 'cross-bar switching', it had quite a number of advantages over the previous 'Strowger' system. Cross-bar equipment is more compact and contains fewer moving parts, thus making it easier to maintain. Most important of all, it possesses the advantage of greater flexibility for integration with modern switching systems in both local and trunk networks. With the advent of cross-bar technology a long range plan for Subscriber Trunk Dialling (STD) became viable. This cross-bar equipment was installed in exchanges at Peakhurst, Kogarah, Hurstville and Kingsgrove during 1964. It was later introduced to Rockdale and Ramsgate in 1965, and Blakehurst in 1966.

By 1970 these exchanges were handling the telephone traffic of more than 56,000 subscribers. In 1984 the number was approximately 96,000 and the forecast for the year 2000 is something in excess of 108,000 lines serviced by the seven automatic telephone exchanges. As at 2/8/2000, Hurstville exchange serviced 35,000 subscribers (not including mobile 'phones).

But still no more about Oatley!!

I asked our next door neighbours and they had their 'phone connected in 1938. I can remember applying for our line in 1954 and had to wait at least 6 months before the application was even processed. Then when we finally received a connection it was a 'duplex' which we shared with people down the street. This arrangement continued for probably 12 months until a line became vacant and we didn't have to share.

In our talk on Jewfish Point, it was mentioned that the 'phone was connected over there in the 1950s - I will therefore have to count on our members filling me in on the dates they can remember, and I will re-type this paper accordingly.

Rayma Papworth.