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PORT OF WOLLONGONG



C.W. Gardiner ~ Garden

Port of Wollongong

by

C.W. Gardiner Garden



**ILLAWARRA HISTORICAL SOCIETY
WOLLONGONG
1975**

Foreword

The Port of Wollongong was originally read to the Illawarra Historical Society, at Wollongong, N.S.W., on 5th December, 1951, the author at that time being the Honorary Research Secretary of the Society.

In November 1953 the author published a duplicated edition of 50 copies.

This second illustrated edition of 1500 copies is published by the Illawarra Historical Society by arrangement with Mr. Gardiner-Garden.

The illustrations are from the Society's archives.

—February, 1959.

This third edition with an increased number of photographs is published to meet the developing interest of the public in the history of Illawarra.

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FRONT COVER

Wollongong Harbour in the 1890s

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THE PORT OF WOLLONGONG

INTRODUCTION

Today, as we look upon Wollongong Harbour, diminutive and unpretentious as it is, in comparison with our present day conception of harbours, it is hard to believe that it attained and held for many years the importance of being the third port of New South Wales. The tonnage and number of ships cleared through it was only exceeded, at the time, at Sydney and Newcastle.

Upon reaching the summit of its importance as a seaport, Wollongong Harbour bowed to progress, now to become merely a historically picturesque anchorage for trawlers and other small fishing and pleasure craft, and a subject favoured by artists and photographers.

This paper will trace the history of the development of Wollongong Harbour and how it came to be by-passed. The Harbour was, in fact, the very centre of the township of Wollongong and little remains today even to suggest that the City of Wollongong had its beginnings in that vicinity. Other items of historical interest in the precincts of the Harbour will also have attention.

In the early years of New South Wales, settlement naturally took place on lands readily accessible from the centre at Sydney. At first there were few skilled farmers among the inhabitants, and while there were periods of desperate shortages of food and other supplies, the early Colony was incapable of developing and controlling additional lands even to meet its needs. However, with the increase in the farming and grazing capacity of the Colony and the dictates of drought came the search for new fields and pastures, and in fact the origin of settlement at Wollongong resulted from such a search.

When consideration is given to the reason for the foundation of most towns and cities, it seems clear (except in cases of seats of government like Canberra and Washington D.C., for example) that wherever human endeavour continues, settlement must occur, and it follows that the focal point of the settlement is where the products of that

Opposite page:—

Wollongong harbour in 1957 WILLIAM A. BAYLEY

endeavour are exchanged. This conception is illustrated by the circumstances surrounding the early settlement of Wollongong, and indeed that of the other coastal towns of Illawarra.

At first the much valued cedar, then the grazing lands, was the lure to Illawarra. The rough country to the north and westward of the district delayed for many years the building of roads to the settled areas radiating from Sydney; accordingly Illawarra was virtually isolated except for sea transport. Small sailing vessels brought to the settlers supplies of flour, salt provisions, tea, sugar, tobacco, rum, clothing and implements, and unloaded their cargoes as best they could at convenient shelters nearest the settlers. In exchange they loaded cedar and the produce of the land. And so it was that villages were established at these shipping points. As the productivity of the land consequent upon settlement and the resultant trade increased, boat harbours were built and these villages developed into the coastal towns of Illawarra.

Wollongong harbour showing "T" jetty and steam crane which replaced hand winding. **KERRY, SYDNEY**



WHERE IS ILLAWARRA?

Illawarra cannot be mentioned without conjuring up thoughts of the brave adventures of the 'first footers' in the district, but the oft told stories of them are outside the scope of this paper. However, something might be said about the boundaries of the Illawarra District which now exists only in a geographical sense.

Governor Macquarie in his despatch of December 12th, 1817, to the Home Government in connection with the District, referred to "part of the Coast known generally by the name of Five Islands, but called by the natives Illawarra" . . . and went on to say "between Illawarra and Port Jarvis there is another very extensive Tract of fertile Land." However, the territory of the Illawarra District Council incorporated in 1844 extended from the coast to the Illawarra Range from the vicinity of Bulli to Jervis Bay. Andrew Garran's Picturesque Atlas, published in 1886, described the district as being "the rugged strip of coast land extending from Coalcliff on the north to Broughton Creek on the south." Broughton Creek was the former name of Berry. The Municipality, and later Shire, of Central Illawarra and the Municipality of North Illawarra existed for many years until those areas were incorporated in the City of Wollongong in 1947. It is now generally conceded that Illawarra more or less contains the area between the Illawarra Range and the sea from and including the amphitheatral bight in the mountains at Stanwell Park to the northern bank of the Shoalhaven River.

SETTLEMENT BEGINS AT WOLLONGONG

Settlement first occurred at Wollongong early in the famous Waterloo year, 1815, when Dr. Charles Throsby established a post near the freshwater lagoon which was to function as the future town water supply until the turn of the century. Dr. Throsby had heard from natives in the neighbourhood of his farm at Glenfield, near Liverpool, that there was plenty of grass and water on the coast in the vicinity of the "Five Islands." An exploratory trip made by the Doctor, accompanied by two white men and two native guides, confirmed the information. Upon his return to Liverpool, he promptly mustered a mob of cattle and drove them down the mountain by the track at Bulli* which his party had cut on their earlier visit. Dr. Throsby erected a stockyard near where St. Francis Xavier's Church now stands and a stockman's hut close to the present junction of Smith Street and Harbour Street. (Re-located in 1950 by B. T. Dowd, F.R.A.H.S., from Surveyor James Meehan's Field Book No. 119). This hut became known as "Throsby's Hut" and, as it will be seen later, was the site of a historically important event.

Reports of the new approach to Illawarra soon spread, and Governor Macquarie, upon hearing of the new grazing lands, decided to make the district at Five Islands available for settlement. Upon Macquarie's instructions, a party headed by the Surveyor-General, Lieut. John Oxley, and his Deputy, James Meehan, set out in June, 1816, to examine the new country and entered Illawarra apparently by Throsby's track at Bulli.

Meehan's Field Book provides details of the journey and records the bearings and distances of the traverses he made. He stated that he reached 'Mr. Throsby's Hut' on June 19 and, in fact, he recorded its position exactly. From thence he traversed Wollongong Head, although it was then not named. The survey was interrupted by bad weather, but some work to the south of 'Tom Thumb's Lagoon' was carried out. A delay due to a shortage of provisions occurred, and as the entries in the Field Book ended on June 28, it is presumed the party then returned to Sydney.

* See Postscript.

Later in 1816, the Sydney Gazette of September 28 reported: "Several gentlemen have removed their cattle thither (to Five Islands), as the neighbourhood affords good pastures; and it is to be anxiously hoped that the stockmen in cahрге of the herds may be able to maintain friendly footing with the natives that at present exist."

On November 27, Oxley and Meehan arrived back in the district to continue their survey and to make out the grants that had by then been promised by Macquarie. The prospective grantees had been invited to meet the surveyors on December 2 "at the hut of Mr. Throsby's Stockman" to have their grants allotted. During the five days, 5th to 9th December, the five first and well known grants in Illawarra were located for Richard Brooks, George Johnston, Andrew Allan, David Allan, and Robert Jenkins, in that order. All of these grants were southerly from 'Tom Thumb's Lagoon'.

John Oxley



Cedar was being cut on the Shoalhaven as early as 1812, and there is little doubt that, if not before, certainly not long afterward, areas in Illawarra close to shipping points suitable for the small sailing vessels engaged in the trade, were being worked. It can be well imagined that the sandy beach in Wollongong Harbour was first used as a loading point for cedar. All timber on Crown lands was reserved and the taking of cedar had been forbidden in 1802 except by the Governor's special permission.

In later years, however, little restraint seems to have been imposed on the trade until a Government order was published on August 14, 1819, stating that persons, bond and free, had for some time illegally resided in the districts of Appin and Illawarra and "there cutting down, sawing, and clandestinely transmitting from there large quantities of cedar and other timber, the property of the Crown." Persons found in possession of cedar or cutting or removing it from these districts were to be prosecuted. Early the following year, it was announced that specified quantities could be cut, upon application, and the granting of permission.

During the years immediately following, the cedar trade grew apace, and the men who worked in the industry, some for employers and others on their own account, were generally a pretty tough lot. They lived a life of nomadic character, for when a stand of trees was cut out they passed on to another. As previously mentioned, some of the timber was transported to Sydney by sea, but some was humped up the Range by the men and loaded on to bullock drawn drays. This, of course, was before the advent of roads into the district, suitable for wheeled vehicles. It is generally agreed that although the cedar getters denuded the country of an asset, which was not replaced, they assisted, in the early stages, the conversion of Illawarra's dense forest lands into the paddocks under crops and cultivated grasses of later years.

About 1817, Dr. Throsby had a small lot of his fat cattle driven to Sydney for slaughter, and as a result "Five Islands beef became very celebrated." The place became overstocked, and in 1820 he and his cattle removed to Bong Bong, his nephew Charles Throsby Smith, aiding him in the task. Charles Throsby's occupancy of the land in the

Charles Throsby Smith



vicinity of Wollongong Harbour must have been of a permissive character, because it was not until March 1825 that Survey James McBrien was instructed to mark out 300 acres for Charles Throsby Smith "at Mr. Throsby's old station on the coast."

C. T. Smith is reported to have said that "he came into the district to look at a stock station belonging to his uncle, and when he saw this place with its little boat harbour, he had resolved to settle down here if he could. At last he pitched his tent here in 1822." On another occasion he said "I located myself hereabouts with my wife, and four Government men (convicts) and commenced clearing the land, in defiance of the blacks, who, at times, were disposed to be very troublesome. I always, however, treated them with great kindness and we soon became great friends."

Early in the same year, Governor Macquarie made a tour of Illawarra and there is no doubt that he entered the district at Bulli by way of Throsby's 1815 track, and travelled along what became known as Cliff Road, passing the harbour on his way southward.

WOLLONGONG IS FOUNDED

In July, 1826, Captain Bishop and a small detachment of the 40th Regiment were established in the Illawarra on David Allan's property at Red Point. The Captain was appointed Commandant, Civil and Military, in the Five Islands District, and two constables were assigned for his assistance. He was instructed to protect the settlers from the depredations of the bushrangers and vagabonds of every description, and besides being required to send to Sydney under military escort all prisoners of the Crown at large, he was to see that no cedar was taken from government reserves except by persons duly authorised.

The Sydney Gazette on July 5, 1826, after referring to the appointment of Captain Bishop, said:—

“We have not yet heard the name that is to be given to the new and first settlement that has ever founded to the south-west of the Colony.”

However, the Surveyor-General, John Oxley, used the name of Wollongong in December of that year when he reported that it was one of the principal ports for the cedar trade in Illawarra, and this seems to be the first occasion on which the name was used officially.

The Military post was not long established at Red Point when it was more conveniently located at Wollongong, the site being where the goal and court house fronting the harbour were built later. The soldiers, who were spoken of at the time as “lobsters” because of their red coats, lived in tents until a party of convicts sent to Wollongong, built parracks and a house for the Commandant.

The opening of the barracks on July 27, 1830, was the occasion of a dinner to which the friends of the detachment were invited. Until the advent of the barracks, the Commandant in his role as Magistrate of the district, had held this court in a tent and the barracks were used for this purpose, as required, until the first Courthouse was built by George Brown, in 1834.

In 1831, John Cunningham established a shipyard on an acre of land near the mouth of the Basin as it now exists. He built a number of sailing vessels.

Instructions were issued to Surveyor W. R. Govett in January, 1829, for the preparation of a plan of the intended township of Wollongong, and he did some work in connection with it. Surveyor Elliott carried out some further work on it in 1832/33.

EARLY ROAD COMMUNICATIONS

Severe floods in December 1833 prompted strong complaints in the Press early in 1834. An extract from the Sydney Gazette of January 14, in 1834, reads:—

"... The present situation of the district required the immediate attention of the Government to cause the roads and bridges to be repaired, for at present all communications with the boat harbour have almost ceased, by any means, but entirely so by the settlers' drays and carts, who are unable to convey the small remains of their hard-earned industry to any market."

"Roads" was the generic name over-generously applied to the bush tracks of the day, and the bridges were but frail improvisations. A correspondent to the "Sydney Herald" on March 3rd, 1834, had this to say:—

"The district of Illawarra, lying within 35 miles of the town of Sydney, can now only be approached by a circuitous route of about 70 miles, and then only on foot or horseback. There is no public road even marked in the district or through it — the inconvenience, annoyance and litigation this causes to the inhabitants you can easily conceive."

He complained that the revenue had been defrauded of more than £100,000 for cedar taken from Government lands, and then went on:

Wollongong gaol and court house OLD PRINT



"Had a moiety of this sum been laid out for the improvement of this district . . . it would have run out a pier into the harbour and made a macadamised road to Sydney, shortening the distance one half."

In April, 1834, the Governor, Major-General Sir Richard Bourke, visited Illawarra with a view as ascertaining "how the district could be best opened by roads and its communication with the Sydney market improved." He gave this explanation of the purpose of his visit, in reply to a petition presented to him by a goodly number of the inhabitants asking for roads and safe harbours in the district. The Surveyor-General, then Major (later Lieut.-Col.) Sir Thomas Livingstone Mitchell, who accompanied the Governor on the visit, set about implementing his instructions, and as a result the survey of the township was completed later in the year.

Notice of the fixing of the site for the town of Wollongong appeared in the Government Gazette of November 26th, 1834, and Mr. H. F. White reported in December that he had staked out the streets in the presence of Mr. C. T. Smith. Provision was made in the 1834 plan of the township for a long breakwater, somewhat south of and parallel to the present main breakwater on which the harbour lighthouse stands, but its construction did not proceed.

Hitherto, travellers from Sydney to Illawarra came via Campbelltown and Appin. From there they either followed a rough bush track to Bulli, descended the Range by Throsby's track and followed the coast to Wollongong, or went on to cross the Cataract River and entered the district by O'Brien's Road, which passes over Mt. Nebo and comes out at Figtree.

As a further result of Bourke's visit, Mitchell planned the Mt. Keira Road which partially followed O'Brien's Road, but provided an earlier descent into the district by way of Mt. Keira, coming out at West Wollongong at the Cross Roads. This road was substantially along the route of the present Mt. Keira road, and was the main approach to the Coast for many years. Surveys for the road from Wollongong to Bulli and from Wollongong to Minnamurra, via Dapto, were also carried out. The Mt. Keira Road and these coastal roads were laid out in 1835/6 with convict labour. For the reason that a port's facilities and its access roads are complementary, mention has been made of the early main roads of the district.

COMMUNICATION BY SEA

By the early thirties, a few farms had been established in Illawarra, the larger holdings being worked with convict labour. One large landholder, James Stares Spearing, was an early petitioner for a road to serve his farm at Paulsgrove on the slopes of Mount Keira. The crops grown in the district included wheat, maize, oats, potatoes, onions, turnips and tobacco. Sheep and pig raising and the production of wool and pork, though on a small scale, was quite important to the district. Surplus produce was taken to "the beach" in the bay at Wollongong, and there shipped to Sydney in the small vessels ranging from 14 to 30 tons, trading to the embryonic port.

Although many of them came in ballast which was emptied into the bay to its detriment, they brought all sorts of supplies for the settlers. On the occasions the surf was heavy, loading or unloading a ship was hazardous and was often abandoned. In 1834, "Sophia Jane" (156 tons), which arrived in Sydney from England in 1831, being the first steamer to come to New South Wales, visited Wollongong. However, it was not until 1839 that the short lived Illawarra Steam Packet Company was formed, and its steamer "Maitland" inaugurated the first regular steamship service between Sydney and Wollongong.

Construction of the proposed breakwater provided in the 1834 plan did not proceed, apparently for the reason that all the available labour was required on roads and other government work considered as being more urgent. The newspaper "The Colonist" on July 28th, 1836, devoted a leader to the district under the title: "The Southern Settlements—Illawarra," from which an extract is quoted:

"The settlement of Illawarra, which is the first we meet with along the Coast to the southward is rapidly rising into importance, and the town of Wollongong is already assuming the appearance of a thriving village."

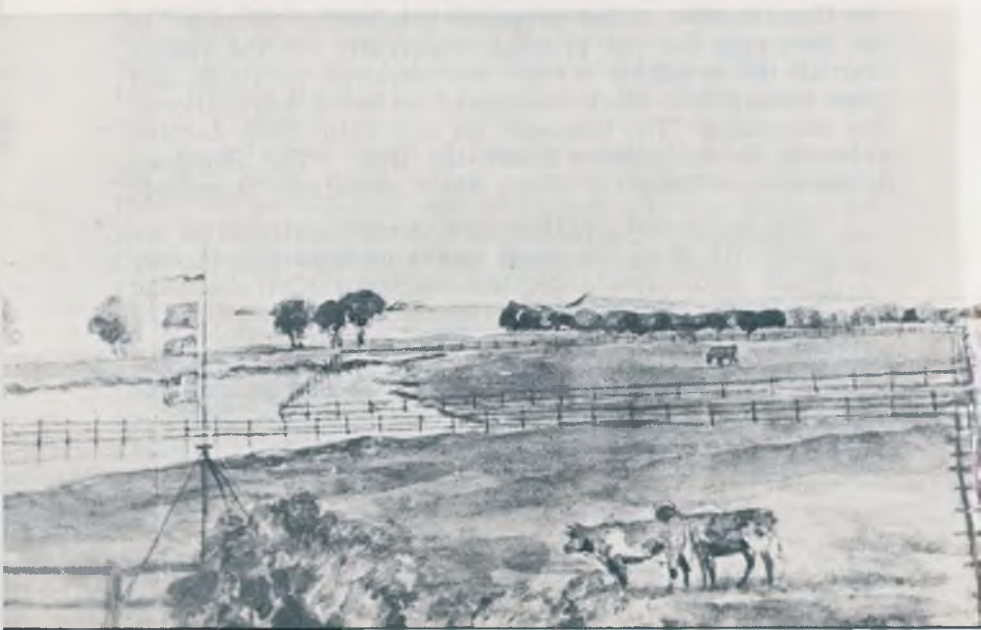
The writer considered that the proposed breakwater would rather deteriorate than improve the harbour, because if it were erected, gales would cause the sea to choke the harbour with sand. He suggested an alternative:

"A few hundred yards to the southward of the harbour there is a pretty large lagoon which might easily be converted into an excellent wet dock and with which a permanent communication might easily be opened up from the harbour, the water-way being protected with strong stone walls and flood gates. All that would be requisite to effect so prodigious an improvement to the district of Illawarra would be the labour of a few hundred convicts for a few months . . ."

The large lagoon referred to was Wollongong's main source of water until it was supplied from the Cordeaux River in 1902. The lagoon was filled in with sand in the early nineteen thirties as an unemployment relief project.

Wollongong's first water supply lagoon at foot of Market Street

JOHN RAE, 1851





Wollongong's first harbour basin and pier

WOLLONGONG'S FIRST HARBOUR BASIN BUILT

Captain (later Lieut.-Col.) George Barney, who is remembered for his civil engineering work in New South Wales, was instructed in February, 1837, by Governor Bourke to carry out the harbour works at Wollongong. A basin with a pier forming its northern side was substituted for the breakwater proposed in the 1834 plan. Later in the year about 300 convicts, accompanied by a guard of soldiers under Captain Plunkett were sent down to construct the basin.

The convicts were housed in a stockade which they erected on Wollongong Head. This headland continued to be known as Stockade Point until a flagstaff was erected thereon, when it was called Flagstaff Point or Flagstaff Hill, and in later years Signal Hill. There is also a Flagstaff Hill at Unanderra on which there was once a flagstaff used to relay the signals from Wollongong. By this means the folk of the district became aware of the shipping movements and were thus able to have their produce at the harbour in good time for shipment.

Work commenced on the Basin on December 18th, 1837, and a writer in "The Sydney Monitor" of May 23rd, 1838, who had visited Wollongong in the steamer "William the Fourth," said the progress of the work was "highly creditable to the directing officer." He gave the dimensions of the proposed basin as 100ft. long, 35ft. broad, and 14ft. deep, and explained that the larger blocks of stone excavated from the Basin were deposited on the Pier and the rest of the spoil "carted by the gangs to form a marine road round the sandy head of the bay which leads from the town to the intended dock."

Apparently, after construction commenced it was decided to increase the dimensions of the Basin, presumably to cater for the increasing trade of the port beyond that anticipated in the original design. Dr. George Underwood Alley in an article contributed to "The Sydney Morning Herald" of December 16th, 1841, said: "Its dimensions are, from the point of the pier to the bank of the basin, 300 feet; and from the same point across, 350; the Basin itself is 150 feet broad at its base . . . at high tide there will be 14 feet of water in the Basin and eight feet at low tide." These measurements are consistent with those of the existing portions of the first basin and pier. The correspondent said that the first stone was laid by Mr. Cronin, the Superintendent of the work, on May 23rd, 1839, and went on to say: "The pier is very neatly faced with cut stone and is finished in a very workmanlike manner." In referring to the work associated with the project, Dr. Alley said:—

The excavation of the basin through solid and intensely hard rock was most laborious, nor was the damming against such a force and constant pressure of water an easy matter; 'twas no schoolboy work; nor was the laying of the foundation of the pier, nor adjusting the facings with cut stone by means of the diving bell a light or unlaborious task."

Dr. Alley prophesied:—

"Wollongong will not always remain a mere commercial entrepot, or port for export of agricultural produce only; it has the means within itself of becoming a manufacturing town."

On April 9th, 1842, "The Sydney Morning Herald" reported:—

"The second or outer dam, necessary to complete the excavating of the basin of Wollongong Harbour, is within a few days of being completed, when the tide at low water will be under command, the remaining work will be comparatively light and not so precarious."

A correspondent to "The Sydney Morning Herald" on November 25th, 1844, wrote:—

"The harbour at Wollongong may now be considered as completed. The houses in the stockade have been sold by the Government; that occupied by Major Macpherson and subsequently by Captain Ramsbottom was purchased by Dr. Cox for £9 15 0. It is intended to be transferred to an allotment at Kiama."

The work on the pier, the basin and its approaches took almost seven years to complete and cost in the vicinity of £3500.

Mention has already been made of the Illawarra Steam Packet Company which was formed on May 14th, 1839, and its steamer, the "Maitland." In August the same year, arrangements were made for the formation of The General Steam Navigation Company to merge the interests of the Illawarra Steam Packet Company and the Brisbane Water Steam Navigation Company. The "Maitland" was replaced by the new Company's "William the Fourth," which traded to Wollongong for many years. This steamer was known by the residents of Sydney and Wollongong as "King Billy" or "Old Billy." "Tamar" another of the Company's steamers, was visiting Wollongong twice a week in 1841, although at this stage the Basin was still under construction.

Bustle Farmhouse of C. T. Smith



ILLAWARRA'S FIRST COAL MINE OPENED

James Shoobert, a retired sea captain who had traded to Wollongong prior to taking up residence in the district, opened a coal mine at Mount Keira in 1849. The mine, the first in Illawarra, was about 100 feet lower than the present Osborne Wallsend Colliery, which opened in 1857. An event of historical importance took place on August 27th, 1849, when a delivery of coal in a number of horse drawn carts was made from the mine to the steamer "William the Fourth" in the Basin in Wollongong Harbour. In the 1840s, agriculture, though of continuing importance, commenced to give way to the dairying industry which throughout the decades to follow, was to assume a major position in the pursuits of the district. However, the advent of the coal industry in 1849 marked the commencement of the dominant primary industry of northern Illawarra. Dominant, indeed, since the great secondary industries of the district came into existence because of it, and must co-exist with it.

Paddlewheeler s.s. Illawarra in Wollongong harbour





Early pier at Wollongong harbour

TRADE AND SHIPPING INCREASES

The Kiama Steam Navigation Company came into being in 1852 and was incorporated by Act assented to October 3rd, 1853. The Company owned the "Kiama" which visited Wollongong. Another Company, The Wollongong, Kiama, Shoalhaven Steam Navigation Company, owners of the "Nora Creina" and the "Illawarra," was amalgamated with the Kiama Company in 1857 to become in October, 1858, "The Illawarra Steam Navigation Company" the forerunner of the well-known Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Company Ltd., which was incorporated in 1902. The passenger and freight trade, particularly between Wollongong and Sydney was rapidly increasing in the 1850s to the extent that a second pier was built in 1856. This was a timber structure projecting from the southern side of the Basin.

"By the plough and the produce of the dairy we prosper." These words were used by Thomas Garrett in 1856 in his paper, "The Illawarra Mercury," on the anniversary of its first birthday. His statement is readily proved on reference to a summary of the exports for the quarter ended September 29th, 1856, published in the paper. The predominant item was 292 kegs of butter, each 50 pounds at 1s 6d per pound, valued at £11,320, out of a total of £18,000.

Other items included in the summary were live-stock, bacon, pork, hides, leather tallow, wheat, flour, bran, maize, barley, poultry, eggs, onions and potatoes. Noticeably small were the shipments of cedar and other timber. The cedar trade had fallen off to a mere trickle.

SEA BATHING IN 1856

In 1856 the columns of "The Illawarra Mercury" relate that Edward Johnson, the licensee of the Brighton Hotel, which was situated on the corner of Cliff Road and Harbour Street, obtained a permissive occupancy of part of Brighton Beach, which was opposite his house, for the purpose of erecting baths "to enable the inhabitants and visitors to Wollongong to enjoy sea bathing, in security and privacy." Although he was unsuccessful in forming a company to undertake the venture, with his own resources he built the bathing machine "Mermaid," measuring ten feet long, five feet six inches wide, and fitted with seats. After a brief postponement, due to inclement weather, the machine was launched on January 5th, 1857. Johnson claimed that his was the first bathing machine in New South Wales. Single baths were a shilling each and children half price. The venture was moderately successful.

Brighton hotel at Wollongong harbour



While the sea-bathing venture was being developed, Samuel Russell, the proprietor of another Wollongong hostelry in the vicinity of the harbour, the "Royal Marine" Family Hotel, opened a list for a public subscription to a fund of fifty pounds to be expended in improving and repairing the existing ladies' bathing-house at the Flag Staff Point, otherwise then known as Stockade Point. Mr. Russell claimed that ten years earlier, he had, by advertisement, circulated the name of Wollongong as being "The Brighton of the Colony." Incidentally, it was Governor Bourke who first likened Wollongong to Brighton.

While Russell wished Johnson's company every success, he suggested a number of improvements. These consisted of a hand rail down the path leading to the place, the bathing houses to be removed to a better place and repaired, the large stones to be moved so as to form a barrier to break the violence of waves when the sea was rough, and a fence all round the cliff top to prevent persons overlooking the place. He said that the Lord Bishop of Sydney "when stopping at his house with his amiable lady," had honoured him by allowing himself to be put down as a subscriber for five pounds.

Tenders were called for the work and some improvements were effected early in December, 1856.

A reprint of a contribution by C.S. to the "Sydney Morning Herald," appeared in "The Illawarra Mercury" on December 8th, 1856. The following extract is quoted:—

"Among the rocks below the hill, whereon the Flag-staff has been erected, there is a beautiful and sequestered cove, well sheltered by most romantic looking rocks, from the swell of the ocean. Two or three dressing rooms have been erected, and at quiet hours ladies occasionally resort there to bathe. But it is at no time safe for them to do so without first posting a trustworthy sentinel upon the top of the hill, from whence full view of this cove is commanded and which is, at times, a place of very public resort. Now a small strip of eye-proof fencing would answer better than half a dozen sentinels. Add to this something in the shape of a gate across the path, by which the cove is approached, and it would be one of the finest retreats that mermaids could desire. Bathers of the

sterner sex resort to nooks among the rocks to the northward of the pier. There are many places here where a man can either wade or swim, according to his capacity; and a swimmer, if he has strength and pluck enough to go among the rollers, may enjoy himself amazingly. But a few dressing boxes are badly needed."

After nearly one hundred years, though seldom used now, these ladies' baths still exist. They are known as the "old Chain Baths," so named because there was once a chain spanning the barrier built between the rock formations to enclose the water.

Wollongong in 1851

The market square viewed from Harbour Street looking south-west. The centre building is the post office, on the left of it in the picture is the Queen's hotel and on the right the building which became the first office of the "Illawarra Mercury". JOHN RAE, 1851



ROADS, COAL AND MAILS

In 1856 7, the steamers "Kiama," "Illawarra" (150ft. long), and "Nora Creina" were engaged in the passenger and freight trade to Wollongong, but there were complaints about the irregularity and want of punctuality of the service given. Due to the prolonged unsettled weather in the early months of 1857, the roads of the district were "perfect quagmires at times for days on end" and the road over Mount Keira to Appin via Broughton's Pass was described as "shamefully dangerous." As a result there was "frequent non-delivery of mails and almost usual irregularity." Because of the state of the roads, mails were forwarded to Sydney on March 13th, 1857, by the steamer "Illawarra." This was the first time mails were so despatched to Sydney.

Early in April, 1857, as already mentioned, the Osborne Wallsend Coal Mine was opened at a point about 100ft. above James Shoobert's workings at Mt. Keira.

Among the exports from Wollongong for the fortnight ended April 11th, comprising dairy, agricultural and other produce of the land, there appears the item "6 sacks Mount Keira Coal." On the 16th, the Mine Manager, William Robson, took 3½ tons to the wharf for use by the "Illawarra," which sailed to Sydney the following day. In September it was reported that the steamers were using 60 tons per week and that a considerable quantity was being exported to Sydney. 420 tons was exported during the fortnight ended September 12th. About this period the ketches "Absalom," "Warlock," "Annie" and "Vision," some of them engaged in the coal trade, and James Shoobert's "Elizabeth Cohen" were visiting the port. "Old Billy" put in an appearance in September.

At this stage, coal was being carted from the mine to Wollongong for export and local consumption for 6s per ton — household coal was retailed at £1 per ton and blacksmith coal at 16s per ton. Occasionally, deliveries ceased due to the state of the roads. In June, 1858, a weighbridge erected for the Kiama Steam Navigation Company, came into use, when twenty carts of coal were weighed.

A SEA TRIP TO WOLLONGONG AND ITS FIRST COURT HOUSE

C.S. contributed an article relating to a trip to Wollongong and which was published in the "Illawarra Mercury," on December 8th, 1856. He said:—

"The passage down was an unusually rough one—with a nasty sea and a stiff head wind. Never had landsman his bile pumped more thoroughly out of him in eight short hours; and I believe all my fellow passengers by the Illawarra were in similar condition . . . Wollongong looked dull enough when we arrived for it was a cheerless sort of afternoon. Yet there was, as usual, a tolerable number of starers at the pier. But I never cared much about being stared at, and even if I had been irascibly disposed thereat, I had just then no bile to be excited . . . A walk round Wollongong is by no means a formidable undertaking, and of improvements I saw none. Even the courthouse is still in the same rascally broken down condition. The direction which I remember having once given to this place will answer better than ever. It was something to this effect: 'Go toward the pier — seek out the most ricketty looking brick building in that vicinity, and when you have found it, you will also have found the Wollongong Temple of Justice.'"

NEW COURT HOUSE AND GAOL

At that time plans were in course of preparation for a new structure, and it was decided that it should be immediately contiguous to the existing building. Tenders for the erection of the new building were called on February 16th, 1857, and there immediately followed unfavourable comment on the plan by the Illawarra Mercury, the paper's view being that the proposed building was altogether inadequate to the requirements of the district. Following representations to the "proper" quarter, an improved plan resulted. In May, the tender of William Stoddart, a Sydney builder, was accepted for the erection of the building for £1250, and the work was to be completed within six months. However, due to inclement weather the building was delayed, and it was not completed until early the following year. On February 1st, 1858, the Magistrates

sat in it for the first time. The old building was subsequently demolished.

In 1859 the tender of McBeath and Bloomfield was accepted for the erection of a gaol. This building was immediately east of the Courthouse just built. In November the Illawarra Mercury reported:—

"This structure is all but ready for tenanting, but we are happy to say no tenants are awaiting its completion . . . The building, if we except the bars in the windows, has almost an elegant appearance from the front, and its situation is one of the best in the town. There are six cells at present; but, should an extension, be required, such can be effected with facility, and without disturbing the proportion so far as appearances are concerned, of the present building."

Wollongong gaol with the coal railways passing around the harbour to the loading staiths. CARL WEBER



IMPROVED HARBOUR FACILITIES COMMENCED

Wollongong's coal industry though in its infancy was making itself felt in the trade of the port, and in response to a petition of the inhabitants to the Government for improved harbour facilities, Sir William Denison, the then Governor-General, accompanied by Mr. E. O. Moriarty, the Engineer-in-Chief for Harbours and Rivers, came to Wollongong in July, 1858, to attend to this matter. At this time, the depth of water in the old basin was 9ft. but due to the incomplete removal of the coffer dam used in connection with the construction of the basin, some of the remains of the dam at the entrance reduced the depth to only 5ft. 6in. There were mooring chains across the harbour mouth and anchorage was unsafe. These mooring chains were affixed to stanchions let into the rocks on the western side of the harbour, and the remains of these stanchions are still visible today.

In January, 1859, plans and estimates for additional harbour accommodation, prepared by Mr. Moriarty, were approved, and £26,892 was voted toward deepening to 10ft. of the old basin, the formation of a new basin opening into the existing one, and the formation of a breakwater for the protection of the outer roadstead. The new basin was to be 600ft. long, 102ft. wide, and 10ft. deep at low tide, and the stone excavated used for the formation of a breakwater. "Works of this character and magnitude were somewhat new to the Colony," and though tenders were invited twice, on the first occasion in December 1860, no satisfactory offer was obtained. As the Government could not get the work done under one contract, it reluctantly had recourse to a system of smaller contracts for labour only, the Government providing the necessary plant. Work on the project commenced in August, 1861, when the steamer "Kembla" brought down the necessary plant.



Tramroads leading to Wollongong basin. The gaol is on the left centre and Brighton hotel on the right. The view looks towards Mount Kembla.

A TRAMROAD FROM MOUNT KEIRA TO THE BASIN

Following the death in 1859 of Henry Osborne, the proprietor of the Osborne Wallsend Coal Mines, the property was leased to Messrs. William Robson, Thomas William Jackson, John Nixon and Andrew Tulip, who adopted the firm name of Robson & Co. These gentlemen constructed a tramway, 2½ miles in length from the mines to a point 12 chains from the Wollongong-Fairy Meadow Road. The coal was tipped at its terminus and contractors carted it to the wharf for 2s per ton. The tramway was opened on November 8th, 1859.

The partners desired to extend their tramway to the Basin, and as they could not obtain a lease of the lands over which the line would pass, satisfactory to themselves, they sought Parliamentary authority to construct the line.

On the grounds that the completing of the tramroad was considered to be of great public benefit in promoting the supply of coal for local and general consumption, "The Mount Keira Tramroad Act of 1860" was passed (assented to on May 23rd, 1860).

The Act authorised the construction of the line, one chain wide and of 3ft. 8in. gauge, from the mines to its termination at the Government road (later known as Cliff Road) at a point $4\frac{1}{2}$ chains north-west of Harbour Street, nearby to where the Brighton Hotel stood. The line was authorised to pass through the lands of the late Henry Osborne, the Mount Keira Estate, Andrew Thompson, and Bustle Farm, which Charles Throsby Smith had vested in a Trust. Furthermore, it was permitted that the line should pass over the Bulli Road, Keira Street and Corrimal Street.

Bulli Road was the later name of the Wollongong-Fairy Meadow Road, and the point of crossing was nearby to where the Albert Memorial Hospital was opened on September 27th, 1864. Flinders Street is now the name of this part of the Princes Highway. It is of interest to mention that the extensions of Church and Kembla Streets through Charles Throsby Smith's lands, where they intersect the tramroad, had not then been carried out and Wilson Street had not been formed. In May 1861, the tramroad was opened and the coal was conveyed along it in horse drawn vehicles. The gauge of the line though authorised as 3ft. 8in., was built as 3ft. $8\frac{1}{2}$ in., and widened in the following year to standard gauge, viz. 4ft. $8\frac{1}{2}$ ins.

ANOTHER TRAMROAD, FROM MOUNT PLEASANT TO THE BASIN

In 1862, James Byrnes (later Hon. James—Minister for Public Works in the second and third Martin Ministries), and his brother, William Byrnes, Sydney Merchants, who were the owners of the Mount Pleasant Coal Mines, sought and obtained parliamentary authority to construct a tramroad. Under the provisions of the Mount Pleasant Tramroad Act of 1862, they were authorised to construct a tramroad, one chain wide from the north-eastern corner of Charles Throsby Smith's grant, thence running a distance of about a half mile (46 chains) in a southerly direction along the Government road and reserve on the sea coast to the intersection of the line with the tramroad from Mount Keira. Nowadays this location is from Stuart Park, where Blackett Street joins Cliff Road, to Brighton Lawn, almost in front of where the Brighton Hotel stood. The Act was assented to on 17th December, 1862, and provided for a 3ft. 8in. track and required the tramroad to be constructed and brought into use within a year of the passing of the Act. The gauge of the track built was 3ft. 8½ins.

From the description of the line covered by the Act, it would appear that the Byrnes Brothers had arranged by private treaty occupancy of the lands over which the tramroad passed from the Mount Pleasant Mines through to the north-eastern corner of Charles Throsby Smith's grant. Part of the line ran through what is now known as Stuart Park, which became public property on September 29th, 1885. Like the Mount Keira tramroad, coal was conveyed on the Mount Pleasant line, at first, in horse drawn vehicles.

The Mount Keira and Mount Pleasant tramroads were later connected to the rail system provided in the Harbour development scheme.

WORK ON THE NEW BASIN

During the progress of the harbour works, it became apparent that the original plans would prove inadequate "so rapid and wholly unprecedented had been the growth of the trade of the district, particularly the coal trade." Accordingly, the Government had to broaden its ideas of the port's requirements to meet the expansion in trade. In 1864, Parliament voted an additional £5000 for increasing the size of the Basin from 300ft. by 102ft., to 455ft. by 153ft., and £3000 for the construction of three high level staiths and railway connections from the staiths to the lines of the Mount Keira and Mount Pleasant Coal Mines. The staiths were platforms on the bank adjacent to the basin, elevated so as to empty the contents of the coal hoppers by means of chutes into the ships' holds.

Because of the exclusion of vessels from the old basin during the excavation of the new basin, temporary wharf accommodation had to be provided in the form of a timber

Wollongong harbour new basin under construction showing coffer dam holding back the water while work proceeds. Smith's Hill is in the middle distance in the centre of the picture.





Belmore basin under construction



jetty 550ft. in length. Hitherto, coal had been set to Sydney in small vessels for purposes of transshipment to foreign ports, and to meet the berthing requirements of larger ships having deeper draught, Parliament was asked, in 1866, for £10,000 for deepening the basin to 18ft. However, the inner basin only was deepened to 18ft. and the other basin to 14ft. at low water or spring tides. There is in existence an excellent photograph of the basin in construction, showing the coffer dam in position.

When completed in 1868, there were three staiths capable of loading 3000 tons of coal per day and there was 1748 feet of wharf frontage "enough for about 15 vessels," and the area of the two basins 3 acres.

Coal loading staiths at Belmore basin



COUNTESS OF BELMORE NAMES BASIN

After taking seven years to construct at a cost of £44,892, the new basin was opened on Tuesday, 6th October, 1868, and this was one of the great events in the history of Wollongong. A special reporter for the "Sydney Morning Herald" emphasised that — "Three great events — the Governor's visit, the Races, and the opening of the harbour coming together, created a most unusual commotion in the picturesque little town of Wollongong. The streets were thronged with visitors from the country and the public houses hung out signals of festivity in the shape of many-coloured banners."

On Monday, in the afternoon, His Excellency, the Right Honourable Somerset Richard Lowry-Corry, Earl of Belmore, accompanied by the Countess of Belmore, Commodore Lambert, Mrs. Lambert and Captain Beresford, were met at the foot of Plunkett's Hill by a large body of equestrians who escorted the party to Queen's Hotel in Market Square. The Vice Regal party had travelled overland and the meeting place, Plunkett's Hill, today is the hill in Corrimal on which the Church of St. Columbkille's stands, on the western side of Princes Highway, with the cemetery and the Public School on the opposite side.

About 10 o'clock in the evening, the Government steamer "Thetis" arrived with other important persons, including Hon. James Brynes, Minister for Works; Mr. E. O. Moriarty, Engineer-in-Chief of Harbours and Rivers; Mr. J. Whitton, Engineer-in-Chief of Railways; and Mr. Bennett, Engineer of Roads. The steamer "Hunter" arrived from Sydney about 5 a.m. on the morning of the great day "with a multitude of visitors." The other vessels in port on the occasion were "Chr. George," "Comet," "Uncle Tom," "Rebecca," "Little Pet," "Spray," "Nowra," "Hirondelle," "Lurline" and "Lady of the Lake."

The official party embarked on the Thetis and the Hunter took on as many passengers as could be carried. The two vessels steamed half a mile or so toward the Five Islands, then returned to the Basin. Thetis glided to her berth and Lady Belmore named the basin "Belmore Basin," by breaking a bottle of champagne on the bow of the ship. A luncheon followed at the Brighton Hotel with Mr.

Charles Throsby Smith, Mayor of Wollongong, as Chairman. Speeches were indulged in and after the function the Vice Regal party set off by road for Kiama. On the following day, the 7th, the Governor returned to Wollongong and held a levee at the Queen's Hotel.

Although the Basin was officially opened on October 6th, 1868, it was in use somewhat prior to that. Robert Houslar, the Officer in Charge of Wollongong Pilot Station at the time, made this laconic entry in his Journal on the day of the historic event — "New Harbour opened by the Thetis."

Races were held on the three days, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday, on a course near Tom Thumb Lagoon, and very little work could have been done in Wollongong during the festivities because the coal ships did not commence to leave until the races were over. The winners may be ascertained on reference to the files of the "Sydney Morning Herald."

Belmore basin with colliers and s.s. Hunter, paddlewheeler, arriving.

TOWN AND COUNTRY JOURNAL 8/2/1873





North-eastern end of Belmore basin showing lighthouse erected 1872, sea wall and breakwaters.

It is worth while now to look at a few figures to gain some idea of the volume of trade passing through the Port about this time. In 1867, coal exports, exclusive of bunker coal, amounted to 23,538 tons, but in 1868, the year in which the new harbour works were opened, the tonnage advanced to 31,443. Ten years later, in 1878, the tonnage had all but trebled to 92,546. During the six months to October, 1868, an average of 68 vessels were cleared each month, or 17 weekly, and during the later three months 29 different ships made in all 199 visits. The steamers, Hunter, Kembla, Kiama and Illalong were the most frequent visitors in that order, and the remainder of the ships were mostly schooners and ketches. At this time, the steamers were catering for the passenger and general trade, while the sailing ships were mainly engaged in carrying coal.

THE BREAKWATER LIGHT IN WOLLONGONG HARBOUR

One wonders what navigational aids were installed for use in connection with the first basin. Presumably a lamp affixed to the top of a standard erected on the point of the pier served the purpose. Be that as it may, late in 1871, it was reported that the new lighthouse erected on the extremity of the breakwater had just been completed, and would be lighted in a few weeks. The tower, which is 42 feet high, was described as having been designed by E. O. Moriarty, Engineer-in-Chief for Harbours and Rivers, and to have been constructed of $\frac{1}{2}$ " boiler plate by Joseph Mathers, of Sydney, under the direction and supervision of F. T. Rose, of the Harbours and Rivers Department.

The illuminating apparatus manufactured by Chance Brothers & Co., of Birmingham, England, in 1870, was originally lit by acetylene gas and showed a fixed light "visible from the deck of a steamer about 12 miles" (officially 10 nautical miles in clear weather). In 1916, the lighting apparatus was altered to provide a group triple flashing light, operated and lit with electricity. The flashing light went into operation on October 1st, 1916.

Wollongong harbour showing breakwater light, with Mount Keira in the distance.



THE FIRST COKE MADE IN ILLAWARRA

For many years in the coal industry, the slack or fines were unsaleable and great mounds of it accumulated at the mines. Fires caused by spontaneous combustion coked some of it. Patrick Lahiff, a colourful figure in the history of Wollongong in that among his achievements he built St. Michael's Church, opened Mount Pleasant Colliery, and was one of the contractors for the construction of the second Basin, is credited with having discovered the coking quality of the Mount Pleasant coal. He erected two beehive ovens near the sloping and broken land midway between the north-eastern end of the Basin and Pulpit Rock.

It is reported that the "Lady Emma" (128 tons) arrived on February 18th, 1876, and sailed on 22nd, carrying in her cargo 10 tons of coke — the first coke manufactured and exported from Wollongong. In 1877, small shipments were made to Melbourne, and in the following year a total of 44 tons was exported. During the existence of the ovens, their ownership twice changed hands and four additional ovens were built. The lease of the lands on which the evens were built expired on December 31st, 1890, and they were demolished in 1892. These ovens had only been moderately successful, but they were the forerunners of the great coke making industry which was shortly to be established in Illawarra.

Wollongong Harbourside in the 1880s.



STILL MORE HARBOUR IMPROVEMENTS

To meet the growing traffic of the Port, additional wharf accommodation and cargo handling gear was provided in 1880 by the erection of the well remembered Tee-Jetty, which was equipped with a crane operated by a steam winch and vertical boiler. The crane column was mounted on a substantial concrete base. Constructed of heavy timbers, the jetty commenced from a point between the basin and the breakwater, and ran in a westerly direction.

A railway connected to the existing rail system, ran along the south-eastern side of the basin, at wharf level. By means of a triangle, the apex of which was near where the coke ovens were, connection was made to serve the north-western side of the basin and the Tee-Jetty. Because of the proximity to the sea of the railway serving the Jetty and to provide protection to the basin, a masonry sea wall was constructed. A stone in the wall bears the inscription "Erected 1881" which is now barely legible. The wall is twelve feet high, and runs from near the commencement of the breakwater to the cliff formation just beyond where the coke ovens were. A rubble embankment four feet high once connected the wall with Pulpit Rock. Another 12ft. wall was built between Pulpit Rock and the base of the cliff. The two 12ft. walls still stand and are in good condition, but all that remains of the Tee-Jetty is the concrete crane base and column, providing a resting place for the ever present seagulls. "Old Pioneer," a contributor to the Illawarra Mercury, said in 1923 that the Tee-Jetty was in ruins, and no doubt it was afterwards demolished in the interests of public safety.

By 1885, besides the three staiths erected during the development of Belmore Basin, there was erected a fourth staith in line with the others and toward the head of the basin, and a high level staith for the coaling of the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company's steamers at their wharf on the south-western side of the mouth of the basin. Besides this, a workshop, store, and two steam cranes on the north-eastern side of the basin had been erected.



Coal waggons waiting at the loading staiths at Belmore basin.

The Customs House of the Port was originally a small weatherboard building on Brighton Lawn at the foot of Harbour Street, but when the Department of Justice moved in 1885 to the new Courthouse in Market Street, the old Courthouse became the office and residence of the Customs Officer. The small weatherboard building was moved to the rear of the old Courthouse and made into a kitchen, with the addition of a chimney. It is of interest to note that the Customs Officer at Wollongong, whose official title was Preventive Officer, had control of matters relating to trade and customs not only at Wollongong, but at Bulli, Bellambi, where there were two jetties, and later at Port Kembla, where there were also two jetties, before it was developed as a port. He had assistants at Bellambi and Port Kembla, and an erstwhile officer, E. Potts, said that "a certain amount of dignity of office had to be maintained in this small though very conservative town" (Wollongong).

THE PORT APPROACHES THE PEAK OF ITS IMPORTANCE

Following the improvements effected by 1885, the Port commenced to reach the peak of its importance when the tonnage and number of ships cleared through it was exceeded only at Sydney and Newcastle. A conception of the trade passing through the Port is gained from an analysis made from the Pilot Station's records for the year 1885, that is three years before the opening of the railway from Sydney through to Wollongong, on October 3rd, 1888.

During the year ended 31st December, 1885, no less than 1624 vessels, aggregating a registered tonnage of 306,241 and having a carrying capacity of considerably more than that, were cleared through the Port. This represents an average of 135 vessels per month or 31 per week. The average registered tonnage of these vessels works out at 25,520 per month or 5889 per week. The import of merchandise and the export of the district's produce was very considerable, and, in addition, it is revealed that during the year under review cargoes of coal totalled 167,653 tons, exclusive of bunker coal, particulars of which are not available. A substantial part of Sydney's butter supply came from the Wollongong district, the average annual export being 1,600,000 lbs.

Shipping figures for 1886 were even higher. During March of that year, taken as being indicative, 42 different ships, 19 of which were sailing vessels, made 165 visits to the Port, that is 125 by steamships and 40 by sail. The registered tonnage of these vessels totalled 28,656 tons and beside the general inward and outward trade the cargo coal lifted was 16,782 tons. Twenty years after the Basin was opened, though sailing ships were still very much in evidence, there was a noticeable decline in their number and tonnage, compared with the steamers visiting the Port.

Mention has been made of the exports from Wollongong since its settlement and something should be said about the dependence of the town and district on the ships for what they brought, other than general merchandise, before the advent of the railway to Sydney. They brought building stone for some of Wollongong's older buildings.



Wollongong harbour showing shipping and the waterfront in its busiest times.

For example, in October, 1875, the "Little Pet" brought stone for the new Post and Telegraph Office which was being built in Market Street. The building, later superseded by the Post Office in Crown Street about 1891, became the offices of some State Government Departments. It is now the Illawarra Historical Society Museum.

The ballast brought by the colliers and other ships were used on the streets of Wollongong. Materials for the mines, such as machinery and explosives, and material for jetty, bridge and railway construction, including rails, sleepers, transoms, piles and girders, came by sea. Locomotives for Mount Keira and Mount Pleasant, and the locomotives for use in the construction and operation of the Illawarra line between South Clifton (now Scarborough) and Wollongong, which was opened for traffic on June 21st, 1887, all came in ships. The steamers "Kurrara" and "Kanahooka," each of 239 tons, registered, made a number of trips to Wollongong, bringing a couple of railway carriages at a time.

A SHADOW OF COMING EVENTS

On February 27th, 1883, Mount Kembla Coal and Oil Company (Limited), opened its jetty at Red Point (as Port Kembla was then known), which was connected by railway to its mine near Mount Kembla. The 1881 Act, which authorised the Company to construct its railway, also provided for a line to Wollongong Harbour connected to the Red Point line; however, this latter line was not built.

In 1887, the Southern Coal Company of New South Wales Limited also opened a jetty at Red Point which was served by a railway connected to the main Government line near Unanderra. When the Government line opened, the Mount Kembla railway was also connected to it. It is to be noted that both jetties were capable of providing accommodation for ships larger than those which were visiting Wollongong.

Wollongong Harbour Trust building — formerly the Market Street post office — now the Illawarra Historical Society Museum.



AN INNER HARBOUR IN TOM THUMB LAGOON IS PROPOSED

In 1887, William Wiley, the Mayor of Wollongong, invited a few persons to meet him to discuss a scheme which he had formulated, relating to Wollongong Harbour. Arising out of the meeting, the Wollongong Harbour Trust League came into being. The League advocated connecting the Harbour with the main railway, developing a basin in Tom Thumb Lagoon connected with the Harbour, and placing the affairs of the Port under the control of a Harbour Trust. Early in the following year, when the Committee of the League were developing their plans, a correspondent to the Wollongong Argus questioned the wisdom of extending the proposed canal (1½ miles long) to so great a distance as Tom Thumb Lagoon, and suggested that dues at 1s per ton on the outputs of Mount Keira and Mount Pleasant would be insufficient to pay for maintenance. The League went on with its plans, and at a meeting of the Committee on March 3rd, 1889, prepared a memorial to the Colonial Secretary, Hon. Sir Henry Parkes, an extract from which is quoted:—

“The growth and expansion of the increasing mineral trade of Illawarra is hindered and retarded by reason of the small space and limited depth of Belmore Basin and Wollongong Harbour, which is consequently filled and dangerously overcrowded with vessels and steamers of too large a size and tonnage for the limited area of the Port.”

To lend point to the foregoing, the Pilot Station record contains the entry on June 13th, 1889:

“Harbour full — no more could enter — stand off signals up.”

THE WOLLONGONG HARBOUR TRUST

The Wollongong Harbour Trust Act became law on October 1st, 1889, and the event was celebrated by a banquet to the Ministry. The Act empowered commissioners to be appointed to construct a convenient, safe and commodious harbour and to develop an extensive dock or basin in Tom Thumb Lagoon connected with the Harbour. Commissioners comprising the representatives, of the shipowners, colliery owners, merchants and traders, the Municipality and the Government, met for the first time on January 3rd, 1890.

In the meantime, the Illawarra Railway, which had

been operating in two sections — Sydney to Waterfall and South Clifton (now Scarborough) to Wollongong — became continuous upon the opening of the Clifton (Scarborough) Tunnel on October 3rd, 1888. The potential benefits created by the advent of the railway were not at first fully appreciated by the people of Illawarra nor by the Government of the day, as they seem to have visualised the railway mainly as an adjunct to the Port. The steps taken by the Government to connect the line with the Harbour seemed to support this view, their intention being to transport the output of the Southern coalfields to the Harbour to meet the growing overseas export trade.

In anticipation of acquiring that portion of the Mount Keira Railway east of the main line to the Harbour, the Government resumed on September 20th, 1889, the land on which to build a triangular junction of the Mount Keira Railway with the main line. Whilst the Act enabling the purchase for £7,500 of the required part of Mount Keira line did not come into force until July 1st, 1890, the junction with the main line had been opened on April 10th. It was said that no trains ever ran from the main line to the Harbour, and no doubt this meant that no Government trains used the line. Coal from Mount Keira continued to be hauled over the line, and photographs show coal hoppers of the Southern Coal Company at the Harbour where they had arrived after switching from the main line to the Harbour by means of the junction.

A GREAT PROJECT FAILS

Returning to the affairs of the Harbour Trust, the influence of the Commissioners who had shipping experience is discerned in the Trust's decision to discard quite early the plan for a basin in Tom Thumb Lagoon, and to seek the advice of Sir John Goode, C.E., an authority on harbour construction who had visited Wollongong in 1885. When the new plans crystallised, the Trust proposed to form, by means of two breakwaters, a harbour enclosing an area of 107 acres at low water, north of Wollongong Head. The eastern breakwater was to run north from Pulpit Rock and the northern one, in a nearby south-easterly direction from just south of Para Creek (now Fairy Creek). Substantial reclamation work was intended to provide access areas for three jetties parallel to each breakwater.

Some evidence remains today of the start made of the northern breakwater nearby to Pulpit Rock. The project was estimated to cost £537,000. However, as finance was not forthcoming, it had to be abandoned. Early in 1893, work commenced on the more modest proposal of building a breakwater running north of the Breakwater Light, but this work, after a portion had been built, was also abandoned. This short breakwater, of which about 80 yards remains, seems to be the only monument to the short lived Wollongong Harbour Trust which was dissolved later in 1895 at the request of the Commissioners. The control of the Port reverted to the Government.

THE HARBOUR FORTIFICATIONS

The Port of Wollongong shared with Sydney and Newcastle the importance of warranting fortification, and probably as early as the first Basin was built in the 1840s guns of Waterloo vintage were mounted on Signal Hill. During a decade about the turn of the century, one of these guns was used as a one o'clock gun. Later, and until recently, it stood in front of the Town Hall. A picture of Wollongong Harbour published in the "Town and Country Journal" on February 2nd, 1873, shows these guns in position on the Hill between the Pilot's Residence and the Flagstaff.

In July, 1879, s.s. "Havilah" (164 tons) brought three pieces of ordnance to Wollongong. It is probable that these were the muzzle loading 68 pounders facing north, between the Pilot's residence and the Flagstaff, on the 1885 plan of Wollongong Harbour prepared by Commander Howard, R.N. It is thought that these are the guns of 1861 vintage, long lying on the grass in front of the house on the Hill, which was the headquarters of the officer-in-charge of the fortifications at Cliff Road and Signal Hill.

In 1890, a gun pit 45ft. in diameter, together with access tunnel, and chambers for ammunition, stores and quarters for the gun crew, were built on Signal Hill. A then most modern 6in. breech loading pneumatic disappearing swivel gun was mounted in the pit. The access was bricked up and the pit filled during 1950.

Not only was the port fortified, but it was also provided with a station and equipment for a Lifesaving Rocket Brigade. The Station was established between the Pilot's residence and the Battery Headquarters.

SOME SHIPPING MISHAPS

The Port was not without its shipping mishaps. The brig "Agnes" (104 tons), was wrecked on the breakwater on March 10th, 1877. In November 1890 the ketch "Maggie" (37 tons) went on the rocks on the western side of the Harbour, and was abandoned to the underwriters. Due to the effects of a heavy gale and the sea-range in the Basin, described as "something terrific," the steam collier "Mt. Kembla" (449 tons) was sunk at her moorings to save her, on February 3rd, 1895. During the same year, and within a few months of each other, the schooners "Janet Price" and "Annie Bow" ran on the stones on the point of the breakwater, but were successfully floated off.

THE PORT OF WOLLONGONG DIES AND PORT KEMBLA IS BORN

The popularity of the Railway grew because it provided a means of transport quicker and more direct than by sea, and a portent of the waning importance of the Harbour was indicated in the announcement in 1895 that the Illawarra Steamship and Navigation Company would cease to convey passengers and would carry freight only. Moreover, building activities were moving away from the Harbour in the direction of the Railway. In 1895, Archibald Campbell, M.L.A., the Member for the district, sought from the Customs Officer statistics relative to the jetties under his control for a deputation which was to wait on the Premier and Treasurer, George H. Reid (later Sir George) in connection with a harbour at Bellambi or Port Kembla. It is of interest to note that in 1862 a Parliamentary vote of £10,000 was made for the construction of a breakwater and pier at Bellambi but construction did not proceed.

As a result of the agitation for the development of a commodious, safe, deepwater port for the Southern Coal-field, Port Kembla in 1895 was so selected. Because of its association with the jetty serving the Mount Kembla Mine, Port Kembla became so called and the earliest reference to this name seems to have been in 1892. Before it was finally decided to proceed with the Port Kembla project, there were leanings towards Lake Illawarra as being the most desirable site. However, on December 23rd, 1898, the Port Kembla Harbour Act became law. Already coal shipments of 4,000 tons in one ship had been made from Port

Kembla, while 800 tons in one ship from Wollongong was unusual. Wollongong's Harbour was then destined to fade into insignificance as a commercial port.

By 1900 there were no vessels trading regularly between Wollongong and other ports except Sydney, but small vessels were bringing in timber from Port Macquarie, Nambucca River and Bateman's Bay, generally leaving in ballast. The outward cargo was mainly coal from Mount Keira and Mount Pleasant.

After the advent of the foundation of the Commonwealth, which took effect on January 1st, 1901, interstate customs barriers ceased to be and the customs activities were transferred to Port Kembla. The building which had served as a Courthouse, then as a Customs House and residence of the Preventive Officer, became the Military Area Headquarters of the district when the Defence Act of 1911 came into being, and has continued to be a military establishment ever since.

The licence of the Brighton Hotel was not renewed after September 30th, 1919, and the building was demolished about 1921. The site has been built on again. About 1920, the Gaol was demolished along with the nearby watch house or police station in Harbour Street, which had been superseded by one in Market Street in 1889. The Government then proceeded with its Brighton Housing Scheme, when ten cottages were built on the site of the old gaol and watch house. Some of the materials from the old gaol were used in the cottages, the last of which was completed in June, 1921.

Although lighthouses generally came under Commonwealth control after its foundation, the Breakwater Light in Wollongong Harbour continued under State control. In 1937, the Commonwealth established the Wollongong Light on Wollongong Head near the disused fort and the old flagstaff, the moorings of which are still to be seen. From a white circular concrete tower, a flashing white and red light is exhibited, visible for a distance of 17 miles in clear weather. Red Light is shown in two sectors to warn mariners of their too close approach to Five Island and Bellambi reefs.

In 1938, Australian Iron & Steel Ltd., who had acquired Mount Keira and Mount Pleasant Collieries, gave the Mount Pleasant railway land east of the Government Railway to Wollongong Council. Perhaps the last fact to be recorded is that ships of the Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Co. Ltd. ceased calling at Wollongong in 1948.

It was said in 1902 that the people of Wollongong were proud of their toy harbour, but today very few of the residents of the City of Wollongong are even aware of the harbour, virtually situated in a backwater as it is, and fewer still are aware of its one time importance. Let it be remembered that the harbour and its environs was the cradle of Wollongong.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

And now, Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen, I desire to offer my appreciation and thanks to those from whom I have received the information to make this paper possible. In particular to the Mitchell Library and its staff, Mr. James Jervis, Hon. Research Secretary of the Royal Australian Historical Society, Mr. Wilfrid Musgrave, of the "Illawarra Mercury," Mr. Dudley Compton, of the "South Coast Times," Mr. F. Jolly, an officer of the Maritime Services Board, Mr. Edgar Beale, Mr. W. Parkinson, Mr. Arthur Leeper, Brother O'Malley, Miss Galvin, and Mr. Alex Fleming.

POSTSCRIPT

Since this paper was delivered, the writer prepared a further paper entitled "Observations on Some of the Historical Aspects of the Prominent Geographical Features of Illawarra," which was read before Illawarra Historical Society on 4th December, 1952. Part of the paper deals with some of the matter contained in Deputy Surveyor-General James Meehan's field book (catalogued as No. 119 at the Mitchell Library). Reference is now made to the discussion therein of Meehan's entry into Illawarra via Appin on Sunday, 16th June, 1816 (though shown in Meehan's manuscript as 17th).

After descending the mountains on the Sunday, Meehan camped for the night, and at sunrise on Monday morning

commenced his tracing toward Wollongong. The bearings generously given in the field book allow the point from which he commenced his traces to be fixed on the relative Parish map. The point was in County of Cumberland, Parish of Southend, at or near Clifton General Cemetery, which is mainly in Portion 19 and partly in Portion 20. The Cemetery is situate east of the Main South Coast Road, between Wombarra and Coledale, near where Denmark Street joins the road. Denmark Street runs in a westerly direction towards the mountains. Parallel dotted lines shown in Portion 43 on the Parish map extend over the mountain from Denmark Street. These dotted lines proved upon search to be a Reserved Road about 25 chains long (refer Lands Department C.832690). The existence of such a route in the vicinity of Meehan's commencing point strongly suggests that he descended the mountain at this point.

It is probable that Meehan entered Illawarra by the same route that Charles Throsby followed early in 1815 when he was guided by aborigines into the district, and it seems unlikely that Governor Macquarie came by any other track on his visit in 1822.

Alexander Harris, or whoever was the author of "Settlers and Convicts," says "came toward sundown to the entrance of the thick brush of Illa Warra mountain above Bullie . . . happily we had but a short way to travel before reaching our resting place for the night. We were now on the flat bordered on one side by the sea and on the other limited by the mountain . . . and at this particular point it is scarcely a gunshot across." He was writing about his visit to Illawarra about 1828.

In the early days, Bulli was a rather larger district than the confines of the present township of Bulli and Harris' description more nearly fits the descent of the mountain at Meehan's point than near Bulli.

Early in the 1840s, Captain R. M. Westmacott (at one time A.D.C. to Governor Bourke and a landholder in the district), discovered a practicable route up the range at Bulli, and with development it became suitable for equestrians and foot travellers. This road became known as Westmacott Pass, and later as Rulli Pass, but it remained impassable for vehicles until 1868.



ILLAWARRA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The Society was founded on December 5, 1944 to advance the study of the history of Australia and especially that of the Illawarra Region of New South Wales. It holds meetings on the first Thursday evening each month excepting January and conducts excursions to places of historic interest. A monthly bulletin and historical booklets are published.

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