"THE WINGECARRIBEEL AND SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS DISTRICT—ITS DISCOVERY AND SETTLEMENT."

The Speaker at the meeting held on 4th September was Mr. James Jervis Fellow and Hon. Research Secretary of the Royal Australian Historical Society and under the above title told an interesting story of our neighbouring district and incidentally bringing into account a number of references common to both. The address was originally delivered to the R.A.H.S. and a complete account is available in that Society's "Journal & Proceedings," Vol. XXIII, Part IV, Pages 247/300, from which the following notes have been extracted:

The district is bounded by Myrtle Creek on the north, Paddy's River on the south, the Wollondilly on the west, and the Illawarra Range on the East. Settlement began as early as 1816, and by 1830, most of the land fit for occupation had been taken up.

The earliest visits to the Southern Highlands country were made in 1798, when a party led by John (or James) Wilson, an ex-convict, made its way south on two different occasions, and on the second reached Mt. Towrang, not far from Goulburn.

In view of these discoveries, it is astonishing that there was no attempt to occupy the country before the Western district was examined. The only explanation which seems to fit the case was the desire of the Government to have no interference with the Cowpasture district and the wild cattle. Access to this area was forbidden by Governor King, and the prohibition remained in force until after 1821.

The first settlers in the Southern Highlands had to obtain permits to cross the Nepean and to pass through the Cowpastures.

The next visitor of whom there is any record is John Warby, sometime about 1807. It is not clear whether Warby passed beyond the present Bargo. Governor Macquarie credits John Kennedy with being the first person to pass beyond Bargo. Kennedy was an uncle of Hamilton Hume. Hume claimed in a letter to the "Monitor" of December 15, 1826, "In the year 1814 in company with my brother, I discovered that tract of country now called Argyle. I was also there in the years 1815 and 1816, and in the year 1817 I accompanied Mr. Throsby on his first tour of that part of the country."
Lastly appears Dr. Charles Throsby, the "official discoverer" of the Southern Highlands country. His first journey was made between July 28 and August 13, 1817. The terminal point of the trip appears to have been in the vicinity of Sutton Forest, or somewhere beyond it. Throsby again visited the district in the following year.

The pioneer settler was Lieut. John Oxley, Surveyor-General, who occupied land as a grazing run, first at Bargo and later at Wingeecarribee. Oxley was in occupation at Bargo in 1815, and seems to have moved his cattle south in 1816.

An extensive native outbreak occurred in March/April, 1816, and it was necessary to take punitive action. Instructions were issued to Captain Shaw of the 46th Regt. among which was mentioned "the country called the Wingie Karrabee, Bargo, Marragan or Minnikin." Shaw stated that Oxley's stockmen had informed them that they had been driven by the natives from their huts at "Wingie Wingie Charabie."

Steps to form a settlement were taken by Macquarie in September, 1819. He visited the district in October, 1820, and named it Sutton Forest, in honour of the Rt. Hon. Charles Manners Sutton, then Speaker of the House of Commons. The town of Sutton Forest was not established until 1854.

The first settlement was at Bong Bong. Today there is not a vestige of the village. Surveyor Campbell, in 1866, says "The steepness of the ascent of the Old Argyle Road over the Mittagong (more properly the Merigang) Range, the supposed irregular supply of water at Bong Bong, and the obstinacy of a few settlers on the Medway Rivulet at Sutton Forest in refusing to sell sufficient land to form a township led to the divergence of the road at Bargo, via Berrima."

With the establishment of a township at Berrima, the village of Bong Bong gradually languished. Berrima itself did not fulfil its promise as with the deviation of the railway through Moss Vale in the 1870's it lost a good deal of the road traffic. The town was marked out in 1830 and named after the native name for the place.

Three historic buildings still stand in Berrima, The Court House, the foundation stone of which was laid by Governor Bourke on March 17, 1835, the Gaol erected d 1834/35, and the "Surveyor-General" Inn licensed 1835.

MURRIMBA: Like Bong Bong, this village near Paddy's River has ceased to exist.

MITTAGONG: Macquarie's instructions under date, April 9, 1816, mentions "Marragan" or "Minnikin." A note in Oxley's Field Book, No. 119, refers to "a round hill in Mittagong."

As early as February, 1841, an attempt was made to subdivide some land in the vicinity, and it was offered for sale as the "Town of Gainsborough," which was unsuccessful. In June, 1842, "Livingstone Township," near the junction of the Berrima and Mittagong Roads, was offered for sale, but the attempt was premature. Nothing further appears to have been done until the Iron Works came into operation in 1849, when the company used some of its lands for housing purposes.

It is of particular interest to the Illawarra district that the first iron smelting works were opened at Mittagong. Ironstone was discovered when the deviation of the road south was being made. Surveyor Jacques reported on December 28, 1833, that he had opened the Ironstone Rock as directed, and had forwarded a box of specimens to the Surveyor General. This deposit was again worked in 1941 by Australian Iron & Steel Ltd., when due to the war a shortage of shipping was delaying ore deliveries from South Australia.

BOWRAL: The earliest reference to the name "Bowral" occurs in Mitchell's Field Book on May 31, 1828; "the hill on the north of Mr. Oxley's station . . . called by the natives Bowrel . . ." and later on May 25, 1829 "a rock named by the natives 'Bowrel,' and by the stockmen 'Gibraltar.'" A newspaper reference in 1866 mentions "the newly formed village of Bowral, where there is to be a station (railway)."

MOSS VALE: Said to be named after one Jimmy Moss, the only
resident of the little valley near the present railway station in the early sixties. The railway station was known as Sutton Forest as late as 1869, although the post office was named Moss Vale.

EXETER: The pioneer at what is known as Exeter was James Badgery, for whom a grant of 500 acres was surveyed by William Harper on November 17, 1821.

PADDY'S RIVER: Named as St. Patrick's River, was named by James Meehan, as Throsby's party reached that point on March 17, 1818.

BUNDANOON: Throsby's Journal records the name “Bantanoon” on March 29, 1818. Surveyor Harper was instructed to reserve 1200 acres of land, one boundary of which was to be “Boon-doo-noon Creek” on October 29, 1824.

THE ROBERTSON DISTRICT: East of Bowral and Moss Vale, towards the edge of the plateau, lies a rich patch of volcanic country which remained a veritable “No Man's Land” for over 40 years after the settlement of the Southern Highlands country. Owing to the richness of the soil and the heavy rainfall, it was covered with a dense brush, which made it well nigh impossible to penetrate. Two basaltic ridges rise above the sandstone of which the plateau consists, and run west. Between them lies a marsh, the Wingecarribee Swamp, one of the many homes of the bunyip.

Oxley examined the swamp in 1822, and was probably one of its earliest visitors. Surveyor Elliott was instructed on February 15, 1828, to trace the swamp round, and then to run a north and south line to the gullies on the edge of what is now Kangaroo Valley.

The swamp was reserved by the Commissioners appointed to survey and apportion the lands of the colony and they recommended that it be drained and used for the location of small settlers. It is still undrained, and there is a periodical local agitation for this to be done.

Charles Throsby, in a letter dated January 22, 1820, reported having found a passage from Bong Bong to Illawarra. The track lay to the north of the volcanic country, and a road was made to the coast through the same region. Both Throsby's track and the road avoided the thick brush. A track to the south leading to the Kangaroo Ground also skirted the brush country.

Some attempts appear to have been made to examine the brush in 1855. The passage of Sir John Robertson's Land Act (Free Selection before Survey) stimulated land seekers to open up the brush country north, south and east of the Swamp.

The “Kiama Examiner” of February 18, 1862, reported that Alderman J. Hanrahan had recently examined the country to the west of the Illawarra district, and had discovered a large tract of rich agricultural and pastoral land well watered. The issue of February 25 stated that he had reached the tableland by a track which led up the Jamberoo Mountain. The “Examiner” reported on May 6, 1862, that Surveyor Mann in company with Hanrahan, had succeeded in discovering a first rate line of road from the Illawarra to Berrima, which ran through the newly discovered country where so much land was being taken up by selectors.

On August 19, 1862, it was reported that the selectors had been favoured with an opportunity for public worship on the previous Sunday (August 17). The Rev. J. G. Turner, Wesleyan minister from Kiama, preached twice and it was hoped that arrangements might be made for regular services a Yarrawa as the district came to be named.

Efforts were also being made to open up the country from the west. Surveyor Campbell on February 25, 1861, had recommended the opening of a road from the Swamp to the old South Road. On March 28, 1861, he was instructed to carry out this survey and measure any available land on the south side of the swamp which was likely to sell.

From about February, 1862, onwards, many applications for conditional purchase selections were made and survey by Campbell. Amongst these were applications from W. R., M., T. and F. Hindmarsh, J. Brooker, E. Harrigan, W. Noble, J. and W. Hanrahan, all of whom
became settlers and whose descendants still retain the lands allotted to the applicants.

A large area around the village of Robertson was reserved from sale by proclamation on May 2, 1862. Surveyor Campbell laid out a village and the plan was approved on July 12, 1865. The reserve was known originally as "Three Creeks," and the village was first called "Yarrawa," but eventually Robertson. The first sale of town blocks took place in September, 1865, when 26 lots were offered for sale. The temporary reserve which had been proclaimed was revoked in August, 1865.

Settlement proceeded at Kangaloon, on the northern side of the swamp. A road to connect Kangaloon with the Old South Road was surveyed by Surveyor Twynam in August, 1865, and two years later it was extended to Robertson, entering the village east of the present highway.—A.P.F.

"THE VETERANS' CORPS"

In the R.A.H.S. "Journal and Proceedings, Vol. XXXVIII, Part IV, September, 1952, Mr. Jervis in his capacity as Hon. Research Secretary answers a query on "what was the Veterans' Corps?" The following note is extracted therefrom as the Veterans' Corps has a link with the Wingecarribee and Illawarra districts.

The first Veterans' Corps was formed by Governor Macquarie in 1810, and consisted of men of the 102 Regiment (the N.S.W. Corps) and it was formed after a suggestion by Lieut.-Colonel Gordon, Military Secretary, that old soldiers of the 102nd who were due for discharge on return to England, but who preferred to remain in N.S.W. might be formed into an invalid or veteran company in Sydney.

On March 15, 1810, Macquarie issued a "General Order" directing that such old soldiers as had served 21 years and were desirous of remaining here should give their names to the Adjutant of the 102nd. As a result, 97 privates, one drummer, five sergeants and seven corporals handed in their names and the company was formed on March 25. They were placed under the command of an officer of the 73rd Regiment (Macquarie's).

In 1825 a second corps for service in N.S.W. was formed with the intention that the men might be employed as Superintendents and Overseers of convicts. The corps arrived in Sydney on September 13, 1826 by the ship "Orpheus."

Governor Darling in 1827 severely criticised the character of the men. "There are not half a dozen men out of the two Companies here," he wrote "whose services are worth the rations they receive," and in November, 1827, he recommended disbandment which was agreed to by the Home Government.

Darling then suggested that each man might be allowed 40 to 100 acres of land provided he entered into a bond to reside on the land and to cultivate it for a period of seven years. Rations were to be allowed for a period of 12 months, and a hut to be provided for each married man. Each married man was to be given a cow. The veterans were placed in groups of about half a dozen and two of the places settled were Bong Bong and Dapto.

In his "Illawarra: A Century of History," R.A.H.S. "Journal and Proceedings," Vol. XXVIII, Part II, Mr. Jervis writes: "Surveyor Knapp records a survey of 10 lots on Dapto Creek in 1829 for veterans, for whom huts were also built. Knapp was instructed on April 10, 1829, to select a dry situation for the huts, and to point out the position of each site to Lieut. Butler at Wollongong, who was to direct operations. The grants were Nos. 27, 28, 31, 32, 34, 35, 9, 10, 37, 36, Parish of Kembla. The original owners in many cases did not obtain the deeds; four only appear to have remained on the land, while the widow of a fifth received title."—A.P.F.

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