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Neville Arrowsmith

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Opening of South Bulli Mine and Bellambi Jetty

Abstract

The Formal Opening of The Above Mine and Jetty Will Take Place To-day at 3pm. Refreshments Will be Provided A Whole Bullock Will be Roasted All Are Invited to Attend and Partake Of the Good Cheer SAYWELL & WILSON Proprietors The above notice appeared in the WOLLONGONG ARGUS on Saturday November 12, 1887 to mark the re-opening of the coal mine at Russell Vale. There had been previous attempts to mine coal from this location but, for various reasons, none had succeeded enough to satisfy the owners and the mine had closed.

**OPENING OF SOUTH BULLI
MINE AND BELLAMBI JETTY
TO-DAY**

**The Formal Opening of The Above Mine
and Jetty Will Take Place To-day at 3pm.**

**Refreshments Will be Provided
A Whole Bullock Will be Roasted
All Are Invited to Attend and Partake
Of the Good Cheer**

**SAYWELL & WILSON
Proprietors**

The above notice appeared in the WOLLONGONG ARGUS on Saturday November 12, 1887 to mark the re-opening of the coal mine at Russell Vale. There had been previous attempts to mine coal from this location but, for various reasons, none had succeeded enough to satisfy the owners and the mine had closed.

Messrs Saywell and Wilson acquired the mine and, armed with a two-year contract to supply 300,000 tons to a Sydney coal merchant, they named the colliery South Bulli.

From that day up until the present time coal has been extracted from the mine at a very profitable rate. In those early days miners were producing 100,000 to 150,000 tons of coal per year, using just pick and shovel and moving the coal from the face to the outside with horse-drawn skips.

Ownership of the mine changed in 1890 when Ebenezer Vickery bought out Saywell and Wilson and he operated the mine until it was acquired by the Bellambi Coal Company. That Company retained ownership until the recent purchase by the Shell Oil Company.

Millions of tons of coal have been extracted from this section of the Illawarra Range and old miners tell me that there are still many millions of tons still there for the taking. The present owners, Shell, say that the getting of this coal is not profitable enough venture and are closing the mine down (no fanfare this time, no party, no bullock on the spit, just 260 miners out of

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work). This despite the fact that in recent weeks there has been an Australian record set for the amount of coal taken in a single week and the possibility of a new world record being set for the same timeframe.

With the advent of the Inner Harbour and Coal Loader at Port Kembla, the Jetty at Bellambi fell into disuse and in 1965 the Army dynamited it as a training practice. In those early days, the ships were filled at the rate of 1,000 tons a day, the original jetty was 2,085 feet in length, two-thirds of which was over water. A second jetty was built in 1889 and for a time both jetties operated to take the precious coal to the industries in Sydney.

For a glimpse of what Bellambi Harbour looked like at that time, interested persons should see the painting in the Wollongong Art Gallery, in the local section, of a view from Bulli Lookout. This painting is on loan from Kiama High School and is quite large.

Neville Arrowsmith