

GROWTH OF WOLLONGONG & DISTRICT SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS CENTURY:

At the beginning of the century there were approx. 10,000 people resident in the district bounded by Stanwell Park in the north to Shellharbour and Albion Park in the south. 4,000 of that number lived

in Wollongong, which at that time was the third seaport of N.S.W., and then the district was in its natural and untarnished state and was perhaps the best-known tourist resort in N.S.W.

Dairy farming and coal mining, with attendant coke-making, were the staple industries.

Wollongong Harbour was the chief outlet for coal export, which was shipped in a great variety of vessels, including steamers, schooners, brigs, brigantines, barques, ketches, etc. The loading totalled about 7,000 tons per week and was produced from Mt. Keira, Mt. Pleasant and, partly, Corrimal mines.

At Port Kembla shipments were from several of the northern mines and was loaded into interstate vessels and also for bunkers of overseas steamers from the old "Southern" jetty, while Mt. Kembla Colliery coal was shipped from the Mt. Kembla jetty.

In addition, small shipments were made from Bulli and Coalcliff jetties, both since dismantled.

In addition, The Illawarra Steam Navigation Co. handled the shipment of produce of the district and also inward loading for local business requirements.

Steamer names remembered are the "Illawarra" (paddle), "Allowrie", "Bega", "Eden", "Merimbula", "Bermagui" and "Bodalla", and they traded to all South Coast ports from Sydney to Eden.

Messrs. A. Parsons & Co. were the main recipients of regular timber supplies from Jervis Bay in the ketch "Ruakaka" which traded for many years between the two ports. Small quantities of Northern River hardwood were also received.

From Port Kembla, coke produced at the Mt. Lyell Cokeworks — opened in 1899 — was despatched to Mt. Lyell Smelters on the West Coast of Tasmania.

At that time there was only one school in Wollongong — the Public at Smith and Church Sts. corner — which then accommodated 700 pupils; Church St. wing was the Infants, Girls occupied the centre and Boys the other wing.

Other schools in the district were Albion Park, Shellharbour, Marshall Mount, Dapto, Unanderra, Berkeley, Keiraville, Mt. Keira, Fairv Meadow, Balgownie, Corrimal, Bellambi, Woonona, Bulli, Thirroul, Austinmer, South Clifton and Clifton.

Business trading hours were from 8.30 a.m. till 5.30 p.m. daily — Monday to Saturday — with Wednesday afternoon as the half-holiday and with a late shopping night on Saturday till 9.30 and later changed to Friday. Some years after night trading was prohibited by legislation and the half-holiday was changed to Saturday.

With the turn of the Century came the first change from Rural to Industrial conditions.

In 1898 legislation was enacted in the N.S.W. Parliament making provision for the construction of the Eastern Breakwater at Port Kembla and in 1900 the first quarry was opened up about $\frac{1}{2}$ mile due south from the headland and in 1901 stone was first tipped to commence construction of the present mile-long barrier.

At that time there were only seven homes for the jetty employees at Port Kembla, three being situated at the foot of the "Southern"

jetty (later dismantled just after the Steelworks jetty was constructed alongside). The other four were situated at the base of the Mt. Kembla jetty.

About this time — on 31st July, 1902 — the dreadful Mt. Kembla Colliery explosion occurred which resulted in the loss of almost 100 lives.

In 1905 the district was adversely affected through the closure of the Dapto Smelting Works and population in that area diminished very considerably. During the following years many homes were moved to other parts of the district, principally Wollongong.

In 1906 an English Coy. was formed to erect what was to be called the Australian Smelting Corporation Smelters adjacent, on the sea-side, to the present works of M.M. Ltd. Building commenced in the following year, but the shareholders became alarmed at the mounting cost and time of erection of the plant and the project collapsed on 20/1/1908.

Fortunately most of the staff were able to transfer to the E.R. & S. Coy's employ on the following day, 31st January. This company had commenced operations on New Year's Day itself that month of 1908.

Thus was born the first and only copper refinery in the Southern Hemisphere.

This Coy. received the output of copper mines and smelters in Australia and including Mt. Lyell, in Tasmania, in the form of blister copper (partially refined) and the chief suppliers were Mt. Morgan G.M. Co., Hampden-Cloncurry Copper Smelters and Chillagoe State Smelters in Queensland, Great Cobar in N.S.W. and Wallaroo Moonta in South Australia.

The company also received the output of all the small mines in the form of ore, concentrates or precipitates containing gold, silver and copper. In later years Mt. Lyell forwarded cathode sheet copper in place of blister.

The output of refined copper in bar and ingot shape was shipped mainly to Germany and England. Gold bars were despatched to England as was part of the silver output (in bars). The balance, in granulated form, was sold to Kodak Photographic Coy. in Melbourne.

The treatment capacity of these works was increased considerably during the 1914-1918 World War and production rose accordingly. Shipments of copper previously forwarded to Germany were transferred to England and America and to Russia via Vladivostock, the port of Russian Manchuria.

In 1918 operations commenced at the Metal Manufactures Works, Port Kembla, principally for the manufacture of cable and telephone wire and boiler pipes from copper bars, ingots and billet shapes supplied by the adjoining works of E.R. & S. Co.

Australian Fertilizers Ltd. began operations in 1921 in the production of fertilizers from phosphate rock, mainly received from Ocean Island and Nauru, smaller quantities coming from Algeria and Florida; while sulphuric acid was manufactured from sulphur rock received from Sicily and Galveston, and from pyrites obtained from Mt. Lyell, Captain's Flat and other sources.

All these three plants have been extended and modernised from time to time and at present are at the peak of production.

Important as all these industries have been to the economy of Illawarra and Australia, the great steel industry which began building operations in 1926 and first production in 1927 was soon to supplant all others in importance, not only in N.S.W. but in Australia itself and even that of the B.H.P. plant at Newcastle. This was made possible because of better and deeper harbour facilities and seemingly inexhaustive deposits of coal suitable chiefly for coke-making.

Now, with the tremendous expansion of the works and the amazing project of the inner harbour which is taking shape at an amazing pace, it seems likely that A.I. & S. will be one of the major works of the world.

With the construction of this plant came the Cross Country Railway from Moss Vale to Unanderra which was completed in 1932, chiefly for the transport of limestone from Marulan and ironstone which was in short supply during the Second World War period.

The firm of Lysaght's at Springhill commenced operations in 1936 producing galvanized iron and in 1938 C.R.M. began producing sheet iron. Both are major plants.

About this time, with the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, clothing factories began to spring up throughout the district in the towns themselves. Previously, Berlei Ltd. became established in Wollongong.

In 1942 Wollongong was proclaimed a city and consequent on the district's tremendous development it is now the third city of the State, Sydney and Newcastle heading it in that order. Broken Hill, formerly third, is now fourth.

In 1954 Tallawarra Power House began reticulation and in a few years' time it will become one of the largest projects of its kind in the State.

In this year of grace 1958 the population has grown to 110,000, from 10,000 in 1900.

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