Dear Sir,

I have noticed a move by a small vocal minority of aldermen to seek the closing of the Wollongong City Library on Saturday afternoons and evenings. We have in Wollongong now a growing and diversified system of education including University, Teachers’ College and Technical College, not to mention many high schools using the Wyndham Scheme of education which demands increased individual research.

Students and adult research workers, whether linked with those institutions or not, find Saturday afternoons and evenings precious time for study and the need for keeping the library open, particularly the reference section (from which books may not be taken away) is vital.

Members of our Society and their friends should write to their aldermen expressing their concern that the central library must be kept open at the times mentioned.

Yours faithfully,

W. A. BAYLEY,

Schoolmaster and author of some twenty-four books and many booklets and pamphlets.

AUGUST MEETING:

Dr. David S. Macmillan, Ph.D., Archivist of the University of Sydney, addressed a well-attended meeting on 4th August on “Sydney — Old and New”, with special reference to the pictorial records of Sydney at various stages of its history.

The pictorial records of Sydney are unusually complete. Even in its earliest days the colony was well supplied with artists, some of whom had found their way here through turning their talents to forging the then newly-introduced banknotes. A little later came artists of a more orthodox sort, such as Conrad Martens (1801-78), one of whose water-colours recently came to light in a somewhat unorthodox setting.

About the middle of the nineteenth century came the photographers, working first with the metal-plate daguerreotype process, then with the wet-plate process, a difficult and laborious method, in which the plate had to be sensitized, exposed and developed (with a large number of different chemicals used strictly in the correct order) all within a few minutes. For outdoor work a portable darkroom had to be taken along and set up beside the camera.

Despite these handicaps some of the early photographers produced work of outstanding quality both technically and historically. Special mention was made of the work done by Henry Beaufoy Merlin and Charles Bayliss for the Holtermann collection, first on the goldfields and then in Sydney in the seventies and eighties. A great number of their negatives have been preserved and are now in the Mitchell Library.

Even earlier was Professor John Smith, first Professor of Chemistry in the University of Sydney, a large collection of whose negatives, discovered stowed away under floorboards at Sydney University, constitute a unique record of the University from its earliest days.

The versatile Professor was a pioneer not only of photography but of higher education for women and pure water for Sydney — having tested unnumerable samples from existing wells and other supplies, he could not say whether they were animal, vegetable or mineral. An Aberdeenshire blacksmith’s son, he had, in his student days, in the traditional manner of the “lad o’ pairs”, tramped from his home to the University at the beginning of each term with his rations for the term over his shoulder — a sack of oatmeal (“A grain,” said Dr. Johnson, “which in England is given to horses, but in Scotland supports the people”), whereupon Boswell for once in his life floored the Doctor, demanding, “And where else, Sir, would you find such horses or such men?” Certainly Professor John Smith, as