The organisers are to be congratulated on their enterprise. From a historical point of view such an occasion fulfills a genuine service in drawing attention to the massive, if unspectacular contribution to the growth and development of Australia made by such families as the Thomases, pioneers of both Illawarra and the North Coast - good solid citizens who, in war and peace, did their jobs to the best of their ability. This country’s debt to them and to their kind is incalculable, and it is well that they should be remembered.

"ONE HUNDRED AND THIRTY YEARS. A FAMILY STORY,
1838-1968." By Stan Thomas.

(Obtainable from the Author, 21 Matthew Street, Wollongong, price $3.00).

In this attractively produced and well-illustrated little book Mr. Stan Thomas has set out primarily to trace the lives and careers of William and Sarah Thomas and their descendants. That he has been able to provide so full and complete a record is a tribute to his patient and painstaking research, and few Australian families can ever have had their history so thoroughly documented.

But the sub-title, "A Family Story," is too modest, for the book is much more than this. The first sixty pages constitute a history of the Albion Park and Marshall Mount district which no future historian of the area can afford to neglect. Aspects to which Mr. Thomas has devoted special attention are dairying and the Methodist Church - the family’s special interests.

In the last section of the book "Friends and Neighbours" Mr. Thomas has also related more briefly the history of some other local families with which the Thomases were associated generation after generation.

The whole book is a record not only of one family but of a way of life, now vanished, which was typical of many Australian country families, and which has been too little recorded. Mr. Thomas has performed a real service not only to his own family, but to Illawarra, and even to Australian history.

THE INTERNATIONAL ABORIGINAL CRICKETERS v. ILLAWARRA -

A Record of "The Grand Cricket Matches" played at Wollongong, N.S.W., April and November, 1867 - Scored and with Sundries by A. P. Fleming. (Obtainable from the Museum or from the author, 11 Marr Street, Wollongong, price 40c, plus 8c postage).

Mr. Fleming’s latest soundly-compiled and attractively-produced booklet is in less solemn vein than its predecessor. This time he does not talk of graves, of worms and epitaphs, but of what the editor of the "Mercury" evidently considered one of the noblest of "the arts and sciences of civilised life."

The team of Western Victorian aborigines who put Australia on the cricketing map of the world just over a century ago played two matches in Wollongong. Mr. Fleming has extracted the reports of the matches from the "Mercury," pruned them of "the redundant journalistic verbage typical of the day," and supplied the introduction, commentary and postscript necessary for a coherent and intelligible account of this interesting and little-known episode in the history of Wollongong.
Fittingly, this appears in the season when another team of "sable gentlemen" is in Australia, demonstrating what was once thought the specially Australian willingness to "have a go." They were certainly willing to "have a go" in 1867. When the original ground at the Racecourse (the site of the Coal Loader) was washed out, they transferred the match to the Green (the Showground). Even there "the bowlers had to hold fast by their heels to preserve their perpendicular, while the balls as they struck the ground, or rather water, generally sent a splash of mud and liquid into the eager eyes of all in close proximity." But the players had other aims than merely avoiding defeat, and, scorning the idea of a draw, battled on till a decision was reached.

Not that all the players of 1867 were paragons of sportsmanship, at any rate off the field, if one can believe the report of the sports which followed the matches. (Did James Richard ever sue the "Mercury" for libel?).

Other things too have changed — four-ball overs, four members of a team sharing the wicket-keeping, the players appearing in "white tights and different coloured trunks and caps" (apparently for easy identification); and any modern team would be gratified if it could draw the same proportion of the population of Illawarra to witness its exploits.

Mr. Fleming is to be congratulated on his evocation of these battles long ago. His enlightening commentary and ready eye for picturesque detail make his account one of absorbing interest not only to cricket-lovers but to all students of Illawarra history. As an author he has long since played himself in, and shows every indication of piling up a big score. Well played, sir!

Note: To those who are mystified by the dedication — we are instructed that the Star of the West is an ancient and famous hostelry in Port Fairy (in the Western District of Victoria), a town redolent of history, where the author, in company with one Ben Howell, spent a wet night at the Oxford Cricket Club's 1968 dinner. (Mary, we presume, did the ministering angel act the morning after).

HONORARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP — Mr. A. R. GRENFELL

To the general regret of members, Mr. A. R. Grenfell (Councillor) announced at the Annual General Meeting that he would not seek re-election owing to ill health. Mr. Grenfell had been a member of the Council, in one capacity or another, for twenty years, and had held the offices of Secretary, Treasurer and Vice-President, it was the Society's misfortune that he consistently refused to accept nomination for the presidency. For many years he gave invaluable service as Tours Organiser, a difficult job which brings many kicks and few bouquets. Excursions have never been the same since he had to relinquish the position.

The meeting carried by acclamation, a motion supported by several past and present officers of the Society, that Mr. Grenfell be asked to accept Honorary Life Membership in recognition of his past services to the Society. Mr. Grenfell agreed to do so. All members will join in wishing him a speedy and complete restoration to health, and in hoping that he will remain for many years an active member of the Society.