
A MEDICAL HISTORY OF THE WOLLONGONG DISTRICT

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Wollongong

From The Medical Journal of Australia, 3/9/1955 p.353 et seq.

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5. PORT KEMBLA

Port Kembla, four miles south of Wollongong, has made phenomenal growth in the last fifty years. When I first knew it it had only two in-

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habitants — Mr. Downie and Mr. Sinclair. I would not hazard a guess as to its population now; perhaps it is 10,000. When the electrolytic works were built there progress began. They were followed by the Metal Manufactures, the iron and steel works, and then Lysaghts works. For many years Dr. Kerr and I shared the Port Kembla work, but after the end of World War I, I built a house there and installed an assistant, Dr. Kirkwood. In three years' time I moved him into Wollongong, putting Dr. Geeves in his place. In three years again Dr. Perkins replaced Dr. Geeves. In three years again came the financial depression and I withdrew my man, as I could not afford to keep him there. After a hiatus of about two years Dr. McKellar started there. After a short stay he sold the practice to Dr. Luscomb, who with various partners and assistants still holds it.

6. WOLLONGONG: THE QUEEN CITY OF THE SOUTH

The first record I have of a medical man in Wollongong is that of Dr. Redall. He and his brother came together. The brother was a farmer living on the edge of Lake Illawarra, who gave his name to Redall's Bay, and those of you who fish may know Redall Reef, an excellent place for bream and blackfish. Dr. Redall was part farmer and part doctor; I do not know how his time was divided. The next man was Dr. Thomas, who practised in Wollongong in a house still standing opposite the Church of England. He was followed by Dr. Marshall; he practised in the house in which I now have my professional rooms; he married a Wollongong girl, and between them they gave the name of Marshall Mount to a district between Dapto and Albion Park. The Osborne family built there a glorious house known as Marshall Mount House; it is still standing, but is only a shadow of its former greatness. In course of time Dr. Marshall went, I believe, to Macquarie Street, and Dr. Thompson succeeded him. He was a retired army doctor, and he lived opposite the Court House. He sent his only son home to qualify in medicine. The son did so, but died of pneumonia almost as soon as he returned. He and his father and mother are all buried in the Red Church graveyard (Osborne Memorial Church).

Dr. Gould was practising in opposition to Dr. Thompson; he had a very small connexion. From him my father bought his practice. As he gave only £20 for it, it must have been a very small connexion; this was in 1884. My father, young, energetic and, incidentally, an extremely competent man, soon established himself. Wollongong had 800 inhabitants, though the district was large. The railway from Sydney to Wollongong was begun soon after my father and family settled in the town. I hasten to add that I was a very small boy then. Up till then all communication with Sydney had been by paddle steamer or by coach that ran twice a week to Campbelltown, where passengers picked up the train. The coach, a five-horse one, started from the Queen's Hotel, now the Queen's Flats.

My father had the contract to attend to all the workers on the line from Wollongong to Otford. He had to ride the line twice a week. It was a very lucrative job, but a very hard one. It was saddle work all the time. He was, happily, an excellent horseman and could get more out of a horse than any man I ever saw who was not a professional jockey. At one time we had thirteen horses in the paddock — eleven for his own riding, my

mother's hack and my little pony. Thirty-odd years later, Dr. Kirkwood, my then partner, and I had the same contract to ride the line from the top of the Macquarie Pass to Unanderra, a 33-mile ride over the roughest possible country. We both enjoyed it; it seemed to be a real man's work. It confirmed my father's opinion that the pick-and-shovel "dinkum Aussies" were the best men in the world to work for. At the time of the Sydney to Wollongong railway, Wollongong had a small hospital of 12 beds, the Albert Memorial Hospital, staffed by a married couple. The building still remains. The hospital was always full; typhoid fever was endemic, as there was no water supply and no sewerage. The Wollongong District Hospital was opened in 1908. It has been constantly added to, but is still inadequate for the demands made on it.

As the town grew, Dr. Fielder settled here, and in course of time he sold out to Dr. Kerr. Dr. Thompson died, and Dr. Jarvie Hood succeeded him. His brother was the most fashionable physician in Sydney at that time. He was a most attractive man, and had he lived I think my father and he would have gone into partnership, but unfortunately he died very young. When Dr. Jarvie Hood died, Dr. Thomas Wade filled his place. He in turn transferred the practice to Dr. W. L. Kirkwood, who sold it to Dr. Jackson when Dr. Kirkwood went off to World War I. In due course Dr. Jackson transferred the practice to Dr. Street, who happily is still with us. In 1902, I having just returned from a year's post-graduate work in England, joined my father, William Kerr joined his brother, and the three practices, Lee, Kerr, Kerr and Wade — consisting of five men, held the district for many years. My father retired in 1911, leaving me in charge. I worked the practice sometimes with a partner, sometimes with an assistant and sometimes with both, till 1954, when I resigned all my lodge and contract appointments; I am now doing only consulting work. For sentimental reasons I did not sell my practice; I simply abandoned it. The Kerrs sold their practice to Dr. Goldie, who most unfortunately died young. Dr. Finlayson, Dr. Wiseman and Dr. Rich now control it. Dr. Street, Dr. Suttor and Dr. Davis hold the old Wade practice.

During the last years several new practices have started. Dr. Duck, with Dr. Walton as his partner, Dr. Bedcomber, Dr. McKinnon as I have already mentioned moved in from Dapto, Dr. James, Dr. M. and K. B. Karn, Dr. Outhred, Dr. Fraser, Dr. Diment, Dr. Powrie and Dr. Pittar are situated in what you might describe as the suburbs of Wollongong. There are also specialists on every part of the body known to man or woman; they are too numerous for me to include them. If you compare this list with the two men who practised here when my father began here seventy-one years ago you will get some idea of how the district has grown.

In the fifty-odd years during which I have practised in this district, I have worked with many men. Three men stand out as men who have left their "footprints on the sands of time": first, my father, who from nothing established one of the largest country practices in New South Wales; Dr. John Kerr, a shrewd, dour Scotsman, whose work was excellent; and Dr. Francis Crossle, of Bulli, a man who became a brilliant surgeon and did excellent work in the Bulli-Thirroul-Clifton area. God rest their souls.

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