SEA TRANSPORT TO ILLAWARRA AND THE SOUTH COAST:

(An extract from an address by Mr. G. A. Hardwick, B.A., LL.B., Councillor R.A.H.S., to the 1972 R.A.H.S. Conference with Affiliated Societies. The editor thanks Mr. Hardwick for permission to reprint).

Trade to the south coast was established early in the 19th century. The coastal range of mountains formed a barrier between the Illawarra district and the rest of the Colony. Settlements at Wollongong and Kiama and on the Shoalhaven River were established in the early part of the century. As with the north coast, trade was first established with small sailing vessels which loaded potatoes, maize and butter off the beaches at Wollongong and Kiama and passed through the treacherous Shoalhaven entrance to ascend the river to load timber and potatoes for Sydney. They too brought back loadings of supplies for the settlers.

The trade to Wollongong by steamship was opened in 1839 and in May of that year the Illawarra Steam Packet Company was formed and in the following month the Maitland began trading between Sydney and Wollongong. The Maitland was the second steamer to be built in the Colony, the first being the Surprise, which has been mentioned previously. The Maitland’s career in the south coast trade was brief for she was withdrawn in August 1840.

After that, services were intermittent and irregular. The Sophia Jane and the Kangaroo, the latter a small vessel, ran trips to Wollongong. There was, of course, no harbour. The ships lay off the beach and passengers and cargo were ferried to and from the shore.

In 1841 the celebrated Benjamin Boyd arrived in the Colony to represent the Royal Bank of Australia and established pastoral runs on the Monaro. The steamers Cornubia and Seahorse traded between Sydney and Twofold Bay.

Early in 1852, the Keira, which had been launched at Newcastle-on-Tyne the previous year, entered the trade between Sydney and Wollongong. However, she made but a few trips, for the Victorian gold rush was in full swing and she was sold for trading between Melbourne and Geelong.

In 1852 the small iron paddlesteamer Illawarra was built in England for Messrs. Edye Manning & Sons for the Wollongong trade.

Towards the end of 1852 steps were taken to form a steam company to provide a service between Kiama and Sydney. Upwards of £6,000 in shares of £5 each was subscribed by local residents and the company — the Kiama Steam Navigation Company — was incorporated by Act of the Colonial Parliament on October 3, 1853. The first Chairman of Directors was David Lindsay Waugh of Waugh Hope, Jamberoo. Another director was Mr. Robert Miller, and it is interesting to note that Robert Miller’s grandson, Alfred Leslie Miller, was the Manager and later Managing Director of the Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Co. Limited, the successor to the Kiama Steam Navigation Company, for 25 years until his death in 1945. The Kiama Steam Navigation Company had the well known paddlesteamer Kiama of 154 tons built in Glasgow. She made the journey to Sydney, taking 144 days, and was destined to become a well known south coaster for many years.

In 1858 the Illawarra Steamship Company and the Kiama Steam Navigation Company joined forces to become the Illawarra Steam Navi-
gation Company and in 1904 this company became the Illawarra & South Coast Steam Navigation Company Limited which itself lasted until 1952.

The Illawarra Steam Navigation Company extended its services beyond the Shoalhaven to the far south coast, building up a very efficient operation. Their ships became known as the “Pig and Whistle” fleet, as they brought large numbers of pigs from the south coast to Sydney. The onset of the ubiquitous internal combustion engine, as it has been described in another context, caused the abandonment of the company’s passenger service in 1929 and the final closing-down in 1952. In 1893 the railway from Sydney finally reached the Shoalhaven River at Bomaderry, thus providing competition for the company’s Illawarra services.

The people of the Shellharbour district were not far behind the other settlements. After having small sailing craft serve them, they formed their own steam company — the Shellharbour S.N. Company — in 1857. This company was absorbed by the Illawarra Company in 1905.

Coal and blue metal provided further impetus to coastal shipping. Loading facilities were provided at Coal Cliff, Bulli and Bellambi as well as Wollongong for shipment of coal, much of which was used to bunker overseas ships, while facilities for loading blue metal were provided at Shellharbour and Kiama.

(Mr. Hardwick’s paper, “The Development of Water Transport,” covering also the North Coast and inland navigation in New South Wales, is printed at length in the “Proceedings” of the Conference, which also contain (inter alia) a paper by Mr. W. A. Bayley, F.R.A.H.S., on “Post and Telegraph Services in New South Wales Prior to Federation.” Copies are available from the R.A.H.S. Price $1.25).

EXCURSION TO GERRINGONG/BERRY,
SUNDAY, 9th SEPTEMBER:

A fine day and everything going to Plan “A”, with 36 excursionists enjoying the weather and the lush Southern Illawarra countryside.

In the morning we visited historic “Renfrew Park”, where we were graciously received by Mr. and Mrs. F. G. Wilson, who conducted us through their home and grounds and gave commentaries. Inside, the period furniture blends perfectly with the home and is a source of interest. Outside, the commanding position gives excellent views of the valley. The beautiful cows (Friesians, all possessing individual names!) and the horses (everyone would have liked to pat them!) were a delight.

As our president pointed out, the Society for some twenty years has been endeavouring to visit “Renfrew Park” (granted 1821, House 1840(?)) and we thoroughly enjoyed the experience. When thanking Mr. and Mrs. Wilson for their kindness, Mr. Maynes presented them with a copy of “Earliest Illawarra” as a small token of our gratitude.

Lunch was at the Gerroa Picnic Area, a good spot for a bus picnic. Our morning and afternoon “timber” stops were at Kiama.

Then on to “Coolangatta”, where the history of the Alexander Berry “Earidom” was given and several buildings inspected under the guidance of Mrs. E. Parrish. The inspection was supplemented by a 20-minute film depicting life on the Estate over the years.

All in all, we think, a most satisfying day.