

MORE LOOKOUTS: TURNING BACK THE CLOCK

The two mountains which dominate our region—Kembla and Keira—have always thrown out a challenge.

Ever since Captain Cook discovered them and described one as "a hill shaped like a hatt," there has been controversy as to which one he meant. Kembla now claims the honour, although there are people to-day who still maintain it to be Keira.

In early days it was evident that friendly rivalry existed between some of the old hands who had settled around these mountains, each claiming theirs to be Captain Cook's Hat Hill.

During 1958 Mount Keira celebrated the opening of the beautiful Summit Park and Lookout, which was officially performed by Lord Carrington. His name turned back the clock for many of the older residents of Mount Kembla, recalling his earlier namesake. The story passed down by old-timers was that during the summer of 1888, arrangements were made for the then Governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington, while on a visit to Illawarra, to view the district from the summit of Mount Kembla. The locals were honoured with the prospect of vice-regal patronage. All the men and boys available lost no time in converting a mile-long rough bush track into a road, wide enough for a buggy, from Andrews' Lookout on Cordeaux Road to the summit of Mount Kembla. They left no stone unturned to have everything in order. On the appointed day the ladies of the village prepared refreshments, set out on trestle-tables with white starched tablecloths. Mr. Joe Makin was chosen to drive Lord Carrington in a buggy and pair to the mountain, where the people were waiting to welcome His Excellency and to accompany him to the summit.

As time passed with no sign of the guest and his party, two young men were sent to investigate the delay. After some time the two riders returned bearing the news that His Excellency was enjoying himself with the town's aristocracy at the Wollongong Hotel, and would call on the mountain boys some day in the future (he never did). Old residents never forgot the incident, which remained a sore point for many years.

The road prepared for the vice-regal visit to the summit was always referred to as "Carrington's Track." Until recent years it was still distinguishable, but is now overgrown and impassable.

The late Mr. J. McNamara of Kembla Heights wrote to the **South Coast Times** (30 April 1959) telling of the incident. The **Times** in reply stated that a search through old files had found no report of any appointment for Lord Carrington to visit the summit of Mount Kembla. Lord Carrington visited Wollongong to open the Town Hall on 3 February 1887, and again in October 1888 to open the through railway from Sydney. The **Times** stated that meetings of a committee formed to give a reception to the Governor were held early in August and September 1888, and that at one meeting a slight reference was made to the hope that he might be taken to view the district from some beauty spot; but at the final meeting nothing was said about the suggestion. One can only suppose that some unofficial

plan to visit the summit of Mount Kembla may have come out of one of these meetings and thus caused the mix-up.

Before and after the turn of the century Andrews' Lookout on Cordeaux Road was one of the district's popular picnic and tourist attractions. During its heyday a very large tin shelter-shed with open front had been built there. Seats were placed inside along the walls, and a tank provided drinking-water. A horse yard made of mortised posts and rails was erected behind the shed. Families and friends gathered there for picnics. Children played cricket and other games. It was often so crowded that late-comers had difficulty in finding a parking spot for their sulkies.

It was also a meeting-place for the young folk from Dapto and Kembla. The Dapto lads rode or walked along the Andrews Bridle-track, which started at Kembla Grange and wound its way along the foothills and mountainside to the Lookout.

Many of Wollongong's vice-regal visitors were taken to Andrews' Lookout. An article in a local paper of 4 October 1902 stated that a meeting had been held in the Wollongong Council Chambers on Monday 29 September to consider arrangements for a reception to the Governor, Sir Harry Rawson, on Eight-Hour Day. The Mayor (Ald. McKenzie) presided. A sub-committee to make arrangements was appointed. At a subsequent meeting it was decided that an address should be presented on the Governor's arrival; that several coaches should be engaged and the Governor driven to Andrews' Lookout; and that there should be a dinner in the evening (tickets 7s. 6d.), after which His Excellency would attend the Caledonian Society Concert.

One will note the similarity of the arrangements for Sir Harry's visit to Andrews' Lookout to those proposed for Lord Carrington in 1888; but I could not imagine any preparations being made by the mountain folk for Sir Harry's visit, for at that time Mount Kembla would have been in deep mourning for the victims of the mine disaster of 31 July 1902.

Andrews' Lookout is no longer the pretty picnic area of bygone days. The bush has reclaimed much of the cleared ground. The panoramic view out to Dapto, the Lake and far beyond still maintains its beauty. In later years the valley below the Lookout became a dumping ground for old cars and thoughtless people's garbage. Fortunately the Council has erected a mesh-wire fence to prevent further dumping.

Nowadays we are led to believe trees talk to each other. If so, can you visualise the trees on Mount Keira looking across to Mount Kembla, and giving a wink and a whisper? Dear old Kembla has the honour of being Captain Cook's "hill shaped like a hatt." Keira maintains that Lord Carrington viewed the Illawarra district from its summit in 1959. Unfortunately the other Lord Carrington—the Governor—in 1888 failed to do so from the summit of Mount Kembla.

—IVY MURRAY.