

OBITUARY

Mr. W. A. Bayley, F.R.A.H.S.

It is with the deepest regret that we report the death of one of the Society's hardest-working, most valuable and most distinguished members, Mr. William Alan Bayley, F.R.A.H.S.

The resolution unanimously adopted by the Council of the Society at its May meeting will undoubtedly be endorsed by the entire Society: "That the Council place on record its appreciation of Mr. W. A. Bayley's great and valuable services over many years to the Society and to the study of Australian history generally, and its sense of loss at his death, and extends its deepest sympathy to Mrs. Bayley and their family."

It is hard to imagine the Society without Bill Bayley—he has played such a large part in its activities for so long. His reputation as an historian was already established when he came to Illawarra as a headmaster, briefly at Waniora and Farmborough Road, and then for many years at Bulli, from which he retired. The Society lost little time in recruiting him in 1956 to the Council, and in the following year appointing him Honorary Research Officer, a position for which he was eminently qualified by his experience in research and his extensive knowledge of source material. He held his office until 1974, except for the two years (1961 and 1962) of his presidency. In 1975 he became Honorary Secretary, a post he retained until last year failing health compelled him to relinquish it for the less exact-

ing position of Vice-President. He remained an active Councillor and continued to attend meetings until very shortly before his death.

From time to time, over long periods, he combined with his other offices that of editor of the Society's Bulletin, enlarging and greatly improving it, and also organising its distribution.

He was the author of over forty historical works, particularly municipal and shire histories, of which his histories of Bulli, Shellharbour, Kiama and Shoalhaven are of particular local interest. A most useful contribution to local history was "The Children's Illawarra"; he was at work on a companion work, "The Students' Illawarra," even during his last illness. Another field, that of railway history, he made particularly his own, establishing Austrail Publications to meet an ever-growing demand. His experience and expertise enabled him to render the Society invaluable service in organising and supervising the production of our own publications.

He was a frequent speaker both at our own meetings and those of other societies, and many times acted as guide to visiting societies. His wide knowledge of the history of the district gave him the advantage of being able to act as speaker or guide on short notice or none.

Not the least of his services to the Society lay in his unique ability to extract financial assistance from government departments and public bodies. Whenever such an application was to be made, it was to him that we turned.

An indefatigable photographer and collector of historical material, he has left the Mitchell Library, the Wollongong Public Library, and the Society's own collection all richer for many generous donations of photographs and material, the latest of which was recorded in our last issue.

This impressive record of service clearly shows how much Bill will be missed and how hard it will be to replace him in his many capacities. But what we will miss most is the man himself—his friendly personality, his readiness to give his time and energy and to share his vast knowledge with less experienced historians or casual enquirers, and the enthusiasm with which he promoted all the Society's activities and interests. He made a great contribution not only to the Society but to the district and to many aspects of Australian historical knowledge and all are the poorer for his passing.