"MY NAME IS BLACKET"

Such is the title of a monograph by Nick Vine Hall, consisting of a genealogical study of the Blacket family from the misty Middle Ages to the present. Coming from so eminent a genealogist, it is a monumental work which is easily followed because of a sound plan of grouping into branches and descendants. This largely offsets the strange lack of an index. Apart from being a model family history, it has fascinating aspects of social history.

The book has local interest. In Australia the most famous member was Edmund Thomas Blacket (1817-1883) whose oeuvre includes St. Michael’s Church, Wollongong. His brother Russell conducted a school here, while his family subdivided some land, which explains the name "Blackett" Street, North Wollongong, a circumstance which should encourage an official correction of the spelling to Blacket. The author’s world-ranging researches were assisted by our Honorary Research Secretary, Miss Margaret McDonald, whose considerable help is duly acknowledged.

Nearly a hundred illustrations throughout 357 pages of text in a limited and numbered edition makes the book, although a paperback, relatively cheap at $20.00 plus $2.00 postage, obtainable from the Society of Australian Genealogists, Sydney. It can be thoroughly recommended to persons with specialist leanings of this nature.

—Edgar Beale.

THE "BLACKETT" STREET SUBDIVISION, NORTH WOLLONGONG

Because of the distinguished family association, a note on Blacket’s subdivision may not go amiss.

Lots 16 and 17 of Section One of C. T. Smith's original subdivision of his 300-acre grant were sold in 1880, and with other adjoining lands came into the hands of one Denis Alfonso. In 1892 Alfonso borrowed £700 from James Russell Blacket and Wilfred Blacket K.C., (the famous barrister) who were both sons and trustees of the will of Russell Blacket, the Wollongong schoolmaster, and hence nephews of the still more famous architect, Edmund Thomas Blacket.

This was about the time of the shattering depression of the 1890s. Alfonso fell into default under the mortgage; the land dropped in value, and the Blackets had to take over Alfonso’s equity of redemption for £361-5-0, with the result that they became the absolute owners of the land. It must have been an unproductive asset in their hands, until perhaps about 1910-1915 it became subdivisible and saleable. Aptly, then, the small new street (near Wollongong’s North Beach) which provided the necessary frontages, bore the family name, subsequently mis-spelled as Blackett. The lots in the subdivision were sold in the span of those years or thereabouts.

Perhaps the Society should make representations to the City Council that the spelling should revert to the original Blacket. It is an honourable name not only in Wollongong’s but in Australia’s cultural history.

—Edgar Beale.