impressive. Leases were obtained for ore deposits in Tasmania and Western Australia but development and transport costs appeared prohibitive and the only practical solution appeared to be the purchase from BHP of Iron Knob ore from the Middleback Ranges in South Australia. BHP was thus the lucky company, being fortunate in that their iron ore leases contained ore with consistent quality and quantity in contrast with those of all other prospective producers of iron. All previous ore deposits varied in grade with increases in silica, chromium or titanium together with falls in iron content while the total mineral content never amounted to the estimated tonnage, as proved in those that were worked out. With all state Governments mindful of the value of industrial development, they instilled into their respective Departments of Mines a policy of optimism that is quite apparent when reading their geological survey reports. Department surveyors and geologists were the worst offenders in overestimating the value and extent of mineral deposits, so much so as to be largely to blame for the failure of enterprises which achieved the production of iron from inadequate raw materials. Even this short lived production could never have been economical while the same Governments continued their free trade policy. However, without the optimism most of the enterprises would possibly have not been attempted.

BHP’s proposition for a seaboard iron and steel works was to succeed with the decrease in pig iron being used a ship ballast as wooden ships were replaced by iron ships. The main product with which BHP had to compete with imports was steel rails and they were not arriving as ships ballast. Hoskins realised they would be in a similar position with the establishment of their Port Kembla works of Australian Iron and Steel Ltd. and Lithgow blast furnaces were shut down in November 1928 as soon as the Port Kembla blast furnace achieved normal production.

Finally there were two small experimental blast furnaces in New South Wales, the remains of which were still in existence for some years after their abandonment. On the Sydney to Melbourne road within four miles of Bookham, 15 miles south of Yass an iron ore deposit was leased in the vicinity of Bogolong Creek, a tributary of Jugiong Creek flowing into the Murrumbidgee River. A syndicate from Albury in April, 1874 had erected a small brick blast furnace to be fired with charcoal. A small amount of iron was produced, no more than to allow the testing of its quality. The contract for the extension of the Southern Line railway from Yass to Cootamundra was let in May 1874 and the establishment of an ironworks was dependent on its completion. By the time the railway was completed to Murrumburrah by March 1877, the scheme had been abandoned.

- J.L.N. Southern, B.Met.E.M. Aus. I.M.M.

(to be continued)

THE DELINQUENT POSTMAN: 1852 STYLE

If it is any consolation to modern users of the postal system, early users had their problems too. Two old letters this contributor has dug out tell a brief but sad story.

Apparently in 1852 the postmaster in Wollongong was a man named Ham-
mond. He ran into trouble over some unexplained affair in which he wrongfully detained a registered letter addressed to a Miss McCauley. Such a thing would never happen today, of course; either they simply would not deliver it, or would send in lieu a curt note to tell you to come and get it. But at that time the tyranny of distance was such that all mail was precious, and was awaited with special eagerness. So complaint was made, the act found to have been unjustifiable, and Hammond lost his job. (Hard times those: fancy losing your job for mere disobedience or malpractice!) From this decision he appealed to the Governor, who referred the matter to the Bench of Magistrates in Wollongong, and they in turn supported the dismissal, in which W.H. Christie, the Postmaster General, concurred. The change was operative from 1st June 1852.

Meanwhile, there being apparently no such thing as a secret in little Wollongong, Mr George Hewlett had, as long before as 29th March 1852, applied for the coming vacancy, to which he was duly appointed. From there he went on to become a leading citizen, a major storekeeper, agent for the E.S. & A. Bank for 36 years, and in 1859 one of the first aldermen of the new Wollongong Municipal Council. He was a by-word for respectability, but even he had a minor lapse into delinquency, if one may credit (as I do) a story told to me in my boyhood.

One hot summer’s day George was seen riding his horse down Crown Street in what must have been a mighty jovial mood, certainly for one so staid and respectable as he was. Indeed, he was all dishevelled and quite tipsy, to the amusement of the townspeople. It appears that he had ridden in the way of business to inspect an orchard at the back of Mount Keira. Not only was it a day of intense sultry heat, but he was, as ever, dressed in his conventional long black frock coat and top hat: was there anything else a banker could wear? So on arrival at the orchard he gratefully accepted a bottled refreshment specially dug out of the cool soil beneath a spreading apple tree. And very refreshing it was, too: so he had another, and another, little suspecting that he was being regaled on very old - and very potent - cider, of the rough sort known in Somerset as scrumpy, which would get a rabbit shickered at sight at a hundred yards. George was the unknowing bunny on this occasion; but, in fairness, from what one gathers, the lapse from grace seems to have been merely a belated, and quite innocent, sowing of his One Wild Oat.

Edgar Beale

MOUNT OUSLEY: ITS LOCATION, ORIGIN OF NAME, AND SPELLING

A routine enquiry addressed to the Society has again raised questions on Mount Ousley. In our Bulletin of October 1971 a theory was mentioned that the area was named after a Gideon Ouseley (sic), though the opinion was then favoured that the name derived from a “local identity”, Ousley Condell. Following inspection of old title deeds, the latter opinion seems to prevail to the point of near-certainty. To avoid dry-as-dust detail, the relevant deeds are identified and may be inspected by further researchers in the Registrar General’s Office, Sydney. But, by way of friendly warning, he or she will need some insight into the mysteries of Old System conveyancing, because the title was notorious for being both cranky and difficult, even doubtful, though now sound enough. Anyhow, from the title documents the broad story emerges.