It seems strange that we have hitherto heard so little of Mary Wade. She was, if not a First Fleeter, very near it, having arrived in New South Wales before the colony was three years old; she was living at Wollongong in its very early days, and was buried here after more than thirty years' residence; and more than one line of her descendants has left its mark on the district. Seven of her children survived her, and it has been estimated that her descendants "probably number tens of thousands".

A committee of those descendants has now made sure that she will be remembered, by compiling a family history which few can have equalled either in detailed research or in handsome production. The book contains an introduction an account of the life and times of Mary Wade, and such source material as the depositions at her trial, followed by nearly 2 hundred pages of family trees tracing the descendants of each of Mary Wade's seven children. The tables for each branch of the family are prefixed by a short historical account of that branch.

At the age of eleven Mary Wade was convicted of "feloniously assaulting Mary Phillips on the King's Highway . . . and putting her in fear . . . and feloniously taking from her person and against her will one cotton frock value 1s, one linen tippet, value 2d, one linen cap value 2d." For this desperate crime she was sentenced to death. (It should be remembered, however, that she was charged with highway robbery, not petty larceny; and that death sentences for comparatively small amounts were seldom, if ever, carried out.

Mary cheated the gallows to live a long and apparently respectable life, and died in 1859 aged 82. For thirty or more years she had been living in Illawarra. She was buried in the old Wollongong cemetery. By one of the too numerous acts of official vandalism in old cemeteries, her grave was obliterated and her grave-stone buried when the cemetery was turned into Pioneer Park.

Among her descendants in the district were the Brookers (whose name, slightly corrupted, became attached to one of the most prominent features of the escarpment) and the Harrigans, who were pioneers in another field. A daughter married Henry Angel (of Angel's Bridge), who went with Hume and Hovell to Port Phillip and with Sturt and Hume to the Darling.

This volume does not profess to be literature, or even in the ordinary sense a biography. It is a record of facts, particularly of births, marriages and deaths. As a reference book it must be invaluable, and it is a model of its kind.

A few copies are available at the Museum: Price $25.00

A SOLID CITIZEN

Henry Collings, the author of "Seventy Years of my Life's Experience", was a man of some importance in the little Wollongong of his day. He was also, on his own showing a pattern of the Victorian "self-made man", who from the humblest beginnings had by hard work, thrift, and honesty in all his dealings raised himself to gain reasonable financial comfort, the respect of his neighbours, and a position from which he could look back - not without some degree of complacency - on a well-spent life.

He was born at Erringden in Yorkshire in 1850, at the worst period of the Industrial Revolution. His formal education ended when he was eight. He was married before he was twenty to Ann (Nancy) Lonsdale. After seven more
years’ struggle he and Ann decided, not surprisingly, that there was very little future for them in nineteenth-century industrial England. With their children, they sailed from Portsmouth in the square-rigger “Lochee” on 19th November 1877, reached Sydney just over four months later, and transferred immediately to the coastal steamer which took them to Wollongong.

At that particular time the only place in Australia of which the average Englishman had heard was Wagga Wagga (pronounced as in Tailwaggers Club).(2) But on the voyage out, some con man had given Henry a very rosy picture of Wollongong and its industrial growth of Wollongong and the bright future which awaited anyone who settled there. So to Wollongong the Collings family came. Henry’s confidence was somewhat shaken when, after arriving at 4.30 a.m., the family’s luggage was “put ashore in the sand banks”, and he “had to a-hunting for the town called Wollongong”. When found, “it was in what I would call a primitive state. It could hardly be called a town in the true sense of the word”. However, there he was and he made the best of it. He was fortunate in being befriended by several of the townsfolk - total strangers to him. He got a job in the Mount Keira mine, but before long had started business on his own account as “a painter, grainer and signwriter, in fact anything in the house decorating line”. The con man had done him a good turn; and, it is only fair to say, had done Wollongong a good turn also.

Henry Collings started with no advantages. His parents were poor. His father was evidently too fond of the bottle, and a rolling stone who never stayed long in any job. Henry’s formal education, such as it was, ended when at the age of eight he went to work in a cotton factory. At the age of ten or thereabouts he was working in an ironstone mine. But he obviously did a good job on his self-education.

He had been married before he was twenty, starting married life “without a penny”. This marriage turned out most happy and fortunate. Though Henry and his Nancy had worries and sorrows, including the loss of several children in infancy or childhood, and of their youngest son in the first World War, they never had cause to their rash and imprudent marriage, which lasted fifty-five years, to Ann’s death in 1925.

Henry’s business prospered. On his own showing he was in a modest way the embodiment of the “Protestant work ethic”, the self-made man so dear to the writers of those improving and indescribably tedious Victorian books for the young, whose heroes rose early, worked hard and late, used their brief leisure to improve themselves, drank little (or better still, nothing), sowed no wild oats and wasted no substance in riotous living. That he attained, if not wealth, at least comfortable circumstances, he (while properly thankful to Divine Providence) as no more than his due reward. He scorned those working men who sheltered behind trade unions and “co-opism”.

A pillar of the Wesleyan Church, Henry was choir master for many years. His reputation as a choir master and composer extended far beyond Wesleyan circles and the bounds of Illawarra. He was an alderman of Wollongong Council from 1902-1905 and 1911-1913; but his comment on this was, “My Aldermanic experiences cost me a good deal of my time - not much pleasure but plenty of annoyance.

As a human document the autobiography is interesting for Henry’s self-revelation: very conscious of his own reclitude as a businessman, a citizen, a
husband and father, and a Christian; and not altogether without justification. In
type he was a hard man, with little sympathy for sinners, prodigals and those
left behind in the race. One suspects, though, that his practice was less rigorous
than his theory, and that his hand was sometimes in his pocket to help some
undeserving no-hoper.

Such people as Henry and Ann Collings contributed a great deal to the making
of Australia. There was no glamour about their lives; they were no doubt narrow-
minded, but what they professed most of them sincerely believed and acted up to.
They were in truth solid citizens, and probably would have desired no better
epitaph.

[For price, availability etc. see note in December 1986 Bulletin Page 75]

(2)
Wagga Wagga owed its celebrity to Arthur Orton, the Wagga butcher whose claim
to the Tichborne title and estates resulted in probably the most sustained
marathon in English legal history.

BOYISH FUN

Having been very kindly invited to spend the afternoon with her nephews who
lived with them during school terms (their Father was a manager of the C.B.C. of
Sydney, branch at coonambie, then a very small town within a district of large
pastoral holdings) and where the teaching facilities at the time, second to Wollon-
gong, the Misses Osborn of Mangerton allowed us to have boyish fun within the
Estate not far from Wollongong; the extent of this estate I do not know, but at
that time consisted of much bush, some cleared land leading down to a gully
and stream. The lower end was leased by the Ladies as a Chinese market Garden,
would understand that this whole area is the Wollongong suburb of Mangerton
and appears in the post code as 2500. Trusting that the word picture will give
some idea as to the incident about to be recounted and the names of those involved
We, (those involved) were fortunate to have escaped as we did, for the common
practise during water-melon time was for the Chinese to employ a muzzle loading
fowling piece loaded with black powder (invented by the Chinese for cracker
purposes only) but charged with saltpetre pellets, illegal, but who would go to the
Police and complain of sore buttocks during melon-time.

Here the incident in question is set down and duly attested; the three younger
members of the party (nuisances to the three elder) departed and left the Mangerton
Home ahead of the three elder, apparently had arranged the plot be forehand,
Ron Osborn, Harold Hosking and my brother Warwick, these three walked diagon-
ally down the hill from the Home to the gully and a little past the Chinese gard-
ner’s shack; as we three, Alick Osborn, Ron Findlayson and self gradually approa-
ched the ¼ mile space, we could hear the intermittant falling of stones on the roof
of the shack, very amusing, (common practise at the time to annoy the Chinese,
this by a few, when safe to do so), apparently our happy attitude was rudely
changed as an enraged gardener decided we were the culprits, armed himself
with a hoe, we hastily retreated back to Mangerton, but slowed down when we
realised that the pursuer was caught up in a barber-wire fence. All this time we
could hear peals of laughter from the smaller fry. We three rushed into the under
house laundry and to be met by the very imposing person of the younger Miss
Osborn. Her withering remarks, “what noble Australians to allow a wild China
man to confront a helpless lady, a very unpleasant thought as to what will happen
should hostilities break out and we have to depend on such as you to defend us”.
By the time the sermon was over the perpetrators had arrived at the doorway to
see and hear the fun.

As mentioned, two of those boys were to leave here during the First World
War and not return, Lieutenant Arnold Hosking, an only son, and Ron Findlayson
the elder of three and Brother Malcolm, mentioned above.

(From the MS reminiscences of C.S. Cutcher. Punctuation, etc, as in original.)