Melbourne, Victorian and Tasmanian men disembarked.
December 13th. We arrived at Sydney early this morning. The Governor came aboard and gave us a welcome home. When I went ashore I was met by my wife and dad. We caught a train to Thirroul where I was met by the Thirroul Brass Band of which I was a member, then escorted to my home in Mountain Road, Austinmer, by a large group of people.
Discharged 17th January, 1918.

The above reminiscences were given to me by Mr. Smith for typing in 1987. Mr. Smith was then nearly 96 years of age and resident in Diment Towers, Wollongong. He was still extraordinarily alert and took a keen interest in current affairs.

I had a number of discussions with Mr. Smith and found him a fascinating man and I was constantly amazed at his powers of recall. He often remarked that he liked talking to young people because all the other people in the rest home did not possess his interest in the world.

Although he was older than most of the other residents of Diment Towers, Mr. Smith often remarked that he often felt younger because many of the other residents lacked his continuing interest in current affairs. Mr. Smith is still very much up to enjoying conversation and I feel sure would welcome any visits by members of the society who would like to learn from his remarkable experiences in the Illawarra dating back to about 1908.

The Society offers its heart-felt thanks to Mr. Smith for sharing his historically important memories with us. On behalf of the Society, I extend to him our best wishes.

ROBERT BROWN AT HAT HILL (MOUNT KEMBLA) 1804

Some controversy still exists as to whether Robert Brown, the noted nineteenth century naturalist, ever visited Illawarra. As Norm Robinson wrote in the I.H.S. Bulletin of August 1980:

"The type specimen of the Spine-tailed Log-runner is recorded as having been collected at Mount Kembla by Robert Brown in 1804. This was eleven years before Charles Throsby built his hut near Brighton Beach. The author has been unable to find any evidence that Brown actually visited the district. On the evidence available, it is probable that another person gave the specimen of this rain forest bird to him."

However, the Transactions of the Lennean Society for 1827 (Volume XV, p.294) record, with regards to the Spine-tailed Log-runner (scientific name - Orthonyx temminckii):

"The Society's specimen was presented to them by Mr. Brown, who met with it near Hat Hill in the year 1804."

Whilst this evidence is clear enough in its statement that Brown had himself collected the specimen, unfortunately no contemporary record of the visit to Hat Hill in 1804 has come to light. In searching for corroborative testimony, we may find an answer in the life story of Joseph Wild, "First Constable of Illawarra."

Joseph Wild arrived in New South Wales on the transport Ganges in 1797, and was for a time servant to Robert Brown. He received his pardon in 1813 and some-
time after 1814 began working for Charles Throsby, in whose service he remained until 1828 when Throsby committed suicide. His nephew - Charles Throsby Junior - took control of Throsby Park and maintained the services of Joseph Wild for the remainder of his life. He died in 1847 at the age of 88 and is buried at Bong Bong cemetery, his tombstone bearing the inscription “Authorised Explorer”.

When Reverend James Backhouse, and his companion George Washington Walker, visit Charles Throsby Junior at Throsby Park in October 1836, they met with Joseph Wild. Backhouse recorded the following in his diary:

"6/10 mo: 5th day 1836 [Thursday 6 October 1836]. Furnished with horses by C. Throsby and attended by an aged man named Jos[ep]h Wyld as a guide we proceeded to Black Bob’s Creek where there is a Road party . . . . . . J. Wyld was transported to this Colony in 1793 and has taken part in some of the remarkable changes in it: he was at one time in the employment of a person of the name of Humphreys who was subsequently Police Magistrate at Hobartown; he [Wild] accompanied Rt. Brown as a servant, in his botanical researches in N.S.W. and VDL; and he discovered the fine tract of country we have lately visited, called Illawarra: he is now in receipt of a pension of 6D p diem from Govt. and having spent many years in the employment of the Throsby family is supported by C. Throsby and allowed the use of a horse and a gun with which he amuses himself: he is 73 years old . . . ."

Whilst no journal survives of the visit of Brown and Wild to Illawarra in 1804, the evidence that it occurred may be deduced from the above.

Robert Brown returned to England in 1805. One 19 July 1807, the Sydney Gazette reported that bird collectors had visited the Five Islands and brought back two new birds - whether Joseph Wild, the ‘discoverer’ of Illawarra, was also involved in this expedition is unknown, though it seems likely.

It is no coincidence that shortly after Wild began working for Throsby in 1814, that individual decided on moving his cattle to Illawarra and forming a stockyard at Wollongong. No doubt Throsby’s expedition to Illawarra from Appin early in 1815 was greatly assisted by Joseph Wild’s prior knowledge of the area, gained during his time with Brown and from subsequent visits.

Michael Organ