

AUCTION OF MENZIES PAPERS

On 24 March an auction was held at Jamberoo Municipal Hall in which a number of historically significant letters, documents, books, etc., associated with the Menzies - Tindell - Thompson families of Jamberoo were offered for sale. Some of the letters dated from 1822 and much of the material was related to Dr. Robert and Margaret Menzies who arrived in Illawarra in 1839 and built Minamurra House between 1840-43.

Such an important collection of papers ideally should have been presented to the National or Mitchell Library. Unfortunately they were offered for sale and the collection is now dispersed throughout the state. Many major items were brought by a Sydney collector with no ties to the family or Illawarra.

The IHS and Wollongong University Archives were represented at the auction, however the prices realised - with the total collection selling for about \$2000 and individual letters going for up to \$350 - meant that we were unsuccessful in our attempt to secure the material and keep it in Illawarra.

Luckily some of the successful purchasers, such as Elsie Stewart and Nicholas Dettman (former, and current owner of Minamurra House) hope to eventually donate their material to the National Library, and others have agreed to supply copies to the IHS.

However the point remains that, like the destruction of an old building, the dispersal of such a significant collection of papers is to be deeply regretted. A monetary value should never be placed on such material for, being unique, it is irreplaceable and therefore priceless.

Hopefully in the future the Society may see the donation of such material to its collection, as it cannot compete in the open market and at auctions due to limited funds.

Michael Organ