

## THE CEDAR CUTTERS

The cedar cutters followed close on the heels of the graziers.

Their practice was to saw the timber into planks, which the men carried laboriously up the mountain side and there loaded them into carts for transport to Port Jackson.

No wonder then, that their descendants, also loaded like packhorses, were able to scale the heights of Gallipoli, over a hundred years later.

There are still old buildings in the country which are lined with cedar and which have staircases, doors and cupboards of cedar. Many more of the old cedar homes have been destroyed by fire, or demolished to be replaced by bricks and mortar. One of the faults of mankind is that he so often destroys, without thought for the future, in order to meet his immediate needs.

Cedar is regarded as being proof against the ravages of white ants and borers; so the cedar trees would have been invaluable to the furniture makers of later days.

Some years afterwards, cedar was shipped from the small harbour at Wollongong but this was a hazardous undertaking and a number of small ships were lost whilst engaged in this trade.

While there were no laws governing cedar cutting in the earliest days, it is recorded that a simple code of honour existed between the cedar getters, which, though not based on legal precepts, was generally adhered to.

As could be expected in a new country, untamed and unpoliced, there was a certain amount of illegal cedar cutting, and in 1820 it was found necessary to exercise control by the issue of cedar-cutting permits.

The cedar cutters were typical of the tough pioneers. Good money was to be made in this business by men who were prepared to work, so they paid little regard to the natural beauty of the countryside. They did work hard, and they lived hard. Their language was mostly a language of oaths and swearing, and when drink was available they drank until it was finished. They were a reckless and boisterous crowd - the product of a new wild land. Ships returning from Port Jackson brought with them kegs of rum, ordered by the cedar cutters, and many a wild carousal took place in which they were frequently joined by white outlaws, colloquially known as "bushrangers." The earliest bushrangers were not necessarily "holdup" men. They consisted of escaped convicts

and of others who, unable to settle down to honest work, lived off the land. The term bushranger was later used exclusively to apply to "holdup" men or highway robbers.

The carousals of the cedar cutters were frequently watched by aborigines, who, hidden by the darkness of night, regarded the orgies as some kind of whiteman's corroboree. Nevertheless these hardy pioneer bushmen opened up a great deal of the country for agricultural purposes, even though they robbed it of much of its natural beauty.

It is a strange thing that the cost of dying has always been a greater source of worry to the working man than the thought of dying, and this was certainly the case in the old days, because there was no cemetery at Wollongong. Many a pioneer found his final resting place in the shade of a gum tree, but the relatives of those in better circumstances, rather than be accused of dereliction of duty, had the remains of their loved ones conveyed to the cemetery at Campbelltown, the nearest consecrated ground. The cost of the thirty mile journey, with several conveyances and the ascending of the steep Bulli Pass was a serious drain on their resources. There was also great difficulty in securing an undertaker. In the 1830's a considerable amount of correspondence passed between the Surveyor-General and his local representatives as to a suitable site for a burial ground. An old plan of Wollongong showed a Protestant burial ground at the corner of Kembla and Banks Streets. A Roman Catholic Cemetery was established near the beach. Cemeteries have since been created in other Illawarra townships and some churchyard cemeteries were used.

In 1952, the Minister for Lands made available, to the City Council, land for the establishment of a cemetery at Kembla Grange, together with £18,500 for its development. Cremation has now become the popular method of disposing of the bodies of the dead, but again arises the problem of the long and costly journey to the nearest crematorium at Sutherland. A local crematorium has been discussed for years, and in 1954 the Council persuaded the Minister for Lands to transfer the grant of £18,500 towards the cost of erecting a crematorium. The Council agreed to raise the balance of the money required. At the time of writing this story, the council has arranged a loan of £13,000 and plans have been prepared for a crematorium to cost £30,000.

This should be commenced in 1955.

By this time a few of the aborigines had deserted their tribal life to follow the camps and settlements of the white men, with their easier mode of living. Around this time, too half-castes, became noticeable, and, as always happens, troubles between the stricter blacks and the whites arose from time to time, so that, in 1826, troops were sent to Wollongong to protect settlers from the blacks and to hunt out bushrangers.

## SETTLEMENT

The earliest recorded land grants in Illawarra were: "The Illawarra Estate," of 2290 acres to Mr David Allen, and "The Berkeley Estate" of 1000 acres to Mr Robert Jenkins, both in 1817.

In 1831 an area of 640 acres, the "Glen Gosh Estate," now known as Garden Hill, was granted to Dr. John Osborne. In 1833 the Elworthson Estate of 100 acres was granted to Frederick Jones. In 1833 an area of 300 acres known as the "Bustle Farm Estate" was granted to Mr. Charles Throsby Smith (nephew of Dr. Throsby). This, is the present Smith's Hill.

In 1836, 200 acres were granted to Rachel Moore White.

These areas, together with the military settlement formed the nucleus of the township of Wollongong.

Many other land grants were made subsequently. William Wentworth received 1000 acres, and Darcy Wentworth 3150 acres and 2000 acres (Bass Estate) in 1821. By 1833 the cultivation of wheat appears to have been well advanced, and two water mills for the grinding the grain were in operation.

(To be continued)