TOM THUMB FESTIVAL 1996

The Week 26-30 March 1996 marks the 200th anniversary of the voyage of the Tom Thumb to Illawarra with Matthew Flinders, George Bass and the boy Martin aboard. As part of this occasion, a number of festivities are planned. It is envisaged that Heritage Week in Illawarra next week will have a maritime heritage theme and that there will be a Tom Thumb festival with possible re-enactments. Two replicas of the boat exist - one in the National maritime Museum and another at the Northbeach Hotel, this later replica being owned by Holy Spirit College, Bellambi.

BOOK REVIEW

"Click Go The Years!"

Elaine Mabbutt’s work highlights photography as a source material for local history. The work represents photographs spanning fifty years of Berry’s history, from 1875 to 1925, arranged so as to focus on the community’s people, their origins and callings, their personal family and social activities and events considered by photographers to be of significance at the time.

For those wanting to know more of the history of Berry, it is a very readable account.

An informative by-product was the activities of itinerant photographers and, as time went by, the studio photographers.

Never throw out old photographs; deliver them to the Museum.

The book is on sale at the Museum.

THE OWEN GUN’S FIRST CASUALTY

In a sensational little article published in the Illawarra Mercury on Saturday June 17, 1995 (p. 30), veteran Mercury Journalist Ron Tindall, in his regular ‘Industry Footnotes’ column, revealed that 53 years ago on June 17, 1942, seventeen year old Timothy Ryan “was killed by a stray bullet from an Owen Gun
at Lysaght's own firing range near the Springhill Road Plant, where the gun was developed and eventually manufactured."

"Timothy's job at Lysaght's was spotting targets while Owen Gun testing was taking place at a firing range within the works site."

"The spotter sheltered in a pit near the targets and emerged after every burst of fire to indicate where the bullets had hit."

"Tim went to mark the target during a reloading pause after one burst of fire. However, one round of ammunition remaining in the test gun's magazine was discharged with Tim in the direct line of fire alongside the target."

Timothy Ryan was buried in Shellharbour cemetery with no special community or military honours.

Research on Tim Ryan's death was apparently "triggered", according to Ron Tindall, after Figtree resident Milton East "related how the Owen Gun death was still clear in his memory."

Ron Tindall is to be congratulated for this ground-breaking piece of research. Why the Mercury is consigning such historical gems to page thirty is beyond me. Ron Tindall's been doing good work for a long time. I first encountered his writing in the November 1967 edition of the quality publication Walkabout.

**PRESERVING WENTWORTH STREET PORT KEMBLA**

I noted recently that the NSW Town of Maitland was to have its entire Main Street nominated for National Estate listing because of its surprisingly intact streetscape of nineteenth century shops.

If ever a heritage precinct in Wollongong needed preserving in toto it is Wentworth Street, Port Kembla. I know of no more intact between the wars strip shopping centre anywhere in Australia. Even movie producers have started to recognize its value and at least one production has utilized both the street and the marvellous Port Kembla baths as the location for a feature film. Some time ago SBS used the street as the opening frames for a locally produced