CONDOLENCES

To Colleen Kirton, on the death of her mother - Winifred Kirton.

REPORT ON SEPTEMBER MONTHLY MEETING

Mr Alan Clarke spoke of one of his most recent projects, 'THE WARATAH MARCH' Of 1915.

It was part of a recruiting drive in 1915 for the World War One effort. The famous "Coo-ee" march from Gilgandra in the north-west of the state was its guiding light but the Waratah March was planned by the Government, Army and co-opted citizen groups to encourage and enthuse enlistments from the south coast area for the war effort. It was all done with considerable local fanfare, no doubt attempting to strike at that raw nerve of adventure, idealism and patriotism which Governments presume is characteristic of every generation.

Camps were set up first at Nowra Showground, and then along the route to Sydney. Large crowds were attracted and for those who volunteered, necessary distinctive gear was issued. The Waratahs made their way to Sydney, arriving in December 1915. The march did not set a hectic or even a military pace and came to a crawl in the Wollongong area in particular. One reason was that the locals insisted on lavishing food on the marchers; a day to march from Unanderra to Port Kembla, another day from Wollongong to Balgownie, are not record breakers. In the suburbs in Sydney, trains were available. They were received in Sydney by officials and a large appreciative crowd. They marched behind the Waratah emblem.

Personal details of the young men who enlisted on the march are available at the Museum thanks to our speaker.

In terms of response the march was by no means overwhelming. It was after the Gallipoli defeat. There were over 100 volunteers who joined the march.

Alan Clark's address was brief but informative.
The speaker is a prolific producer of items of local history and he has many publications to his credit of the Shoalhaven District and they too are available at the Museum.

Peter Daly

‘ESSLEMONT’- 23 KEIRA STREET

(“position position position;
a colonial winner facing north;
a must for you artists and writers;
charmer!”)

‘Esslemont’ at 23 Keira Street, Wollongong, is probably the oldest house on Smith’s Hill. It was built in 1888 by Dr Lee who at that time owned ‘Little Milton’ in Smith Street, Wollongong.

He was the medical all rounder to the men building the Otford Railway Tunnel. The rail track at that time only extended from Wollongong to Otford and the new tunnel would connect the South Coast to Sydney. Part of his fees were paid in bricks being used to build the tunnel and these bricks were used to build the extensions to ‘Little Milton’ which fronts Smith Street, and used as his surgery and to build ‘Esslemont’.

‘Esslemont’ was built for a Doctor Esslemont who was to marry Dr Lee’s eldest daughter. However the young doctor was diagnosed as having consumption and as such not suitable to marry.

He went off back to England and was expected to have a short life expectancy. The eldest daughter never married and lived to the age of 92 at ‘Little Milton’.

Strangely enough there have been several strangers knock at the door of ‘Esslemont’ and announce they are the descendants of one Dr Esslemont who lived to a ripe old age and had several children.

‘Esslemont’ has been carefully restored and all the best old features retained on the advice of past and present heritage officers of Wollongong Council by Captain Gerry Seymour who previously owned both ‘Little Milton’ and ‘Esslemont’. The