

ILLAWARRA SPRINGS

While researching the History of Ball's Cordial factory at Woonona for a forthcoming publication, I came across a reference to the fact that the reason the factory was sited on the Princes Highway at Woonona (on the western side, just between the present Night and Day Chemist and Payless Supermarket) was this locations proximity to "a valuable natural spring".

I was also surprised to learn that even after the factory was taken over by Lockett Brothers and then Parkinson's (of 'Toast of the Coast' fame) the owners reputedly continued to utilize the spring in the manufacture of their "aerated waters" into the 1940s.

Today, only the very observant would spot the three culverts in the vicinity and recognise that this was once the site of a substantial water-course.

This then set me thinking about how the existence of a natural spring on a particular piece of local real estate once added greatly to its value.

The earliest and most famous of our natural springs was of course found at Spring Hill, which (perhaps not coincidentally) is reputedly the site of the first pub in Illawarra (c. 1828). Possibly, this natural spring was

used as part of the premises supply of waters (aerated and otherwise).

The only other spring that I can think of that has given its name to a place in Illawarra is Spring Creek, at Kiama. This site is currently the site of much zoning dispute and Kiama Council has promoted it as an example of ecologically sustainable development. I have it on good report that the two springs which feed into the creek are still visible.

A friend of mine owns a property in Fountaindale Road, Jamberoo and his water supply comes from a Spring which feeds directly into the creek at the back of his property. Such phenomena were prized by our early farmers.

A resident of Harboard Street, Thirroul, never has to water her gardens because she has a hose connected to her spring which happily pumps low volumes of water all year round, but she chooses the town water supply for drinking purposes.

Kareelah, Alf & Vi East's property at Marshall Mount, also has a fine spring apart from its equally fine gardens which were open to the public recently. This spring now feeds into a dam and has never been known to run dry.

In this age where water conservation is becoming even more of a priority and where Australia has the highest per capita water consumption in the world (2000 litres per person per day - pretty scary for the world's driest continent!) I think its time we started to value the springs of the Illawarra once more.

I would be delighted to hear from readers who know the location of any other springs in Illawarra and whether they are utilised today. I think it would be great if we could compile an inventory and to start to map the fresh spring water heritage of our region.

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