

REPORT ON NOVEMBER MEETING

Mr. Donald Hoskins addressed a large audience at our Museum venue.

He traced the personal and business history of his grandfather, Charles Hoskins. It was a pre-release account of his book, "The Iron Maker, Life of Charles Hoskins, 1851 - 1926", to be published by Wollongong University Press, now next February, he said.

The Hoskins family first settled in Melbourne in the early 1850's and were there engaged in the gunsmith's trade. This was a time when there were developments in handheld

weaponry, and loading magazines. Mr. Colt was mentioned and we have all heard of a Colt 45.

Charles and his brother became involved at an early age in the manufacture of cast iron pipes in Sydney from the late 1870's. From that beginning, they became a successful tenderer for the supply of cast iron pipes to the authority building the Perth to Kalgoorlie Water Supply Scheme and after that venture were involved in the take over of a financially "strapped" enterprise namely, "William Stafford's Lithgow Works". Sid Hoskins and his brother Cecil, our speaker's father became involved as young men in that activity. Steel making was a new venture for them, but even so, Charles Hoskins gathered round him a team of experts to make it a most successful undertaking. The raw materials available on the western side of the Blue Mountains were limited in extent and quality and well away from the market. Charles Hoskins, then operating a coal mine at Wongawilli, conceived a plan for the development of the steel industry in the Port Kembla area. He had acquired for \$10,000.00 (5000 pounds) the site for the present Steel Works.

By the 1920's the program of moving the Lithgow works to Port Kembla had begun. This could be another topic in this brief account. The speaker covered the source of capital and the parties involved. The speaker's father, Cecil Hoskins had moved to the Sydney area, to attract public investment and his brother Sid settled in the Wollongong area where he made an outstanding contribution to the Steel Industry and to other worthwhile community works in the district. The size of the undertaking was immense and production difficulties were encountered. Plant was brought from the United Kingdom. It had its teething problems. But worst of all, the depression hit and the venture was certainly tested. BHP involved in steel making in NSW at Newcastle since 1915 came to the rescue and Australian Iron and Steel Pty Limited was formed in the mid 1930's.

There were interesting questions from the floor and one thing that was evident at the meeting was the wonderful interest and loyalty that the Lithgow company generated amongst its employees.

Charles Hoskins was an outstanding entrepreneur and even before the turn of the century was the employer of 3000 Australians in a variety of undertakings. It was a most interesting address. We look forward to having the book on sale at our Museum.