and Ann Meredith's retail activities had prospered sufficiently to give their son, Frederick Gibbons (named after his maternal grandfather), sufficient start in life to enable him to go on to build a sprawling Victorian mansion called "Dapetto".

As the accompanying photo shows it was a splendid residence.

THE ORIGIN OF THE PLACE NAME "DAPTO"

The interesting detail revealed by the choice of the house name "Dappeto" is that it lends some support to the view of John Brown who, according to Bill McDonald in his IHS publication Nineteenth Century Dapto (p.75; 1976 edition), was quoted in 1893 as indicating that "the western portion of the Hooka lands towards West Dapto...was called by the aboriginals "Dabpeto".

Because Frederick Gibbins transliteration of the place-name also has three syllables. This tends to indicate that both "Dappeto" and "Dabpeto" are varying transliterations of what is probably exactly the same aboriginal word rendered by different native speakers. The fact that Gibbins grew up in the area in the 1840s also lends weight to the much later reminiscence of John Brown.

The earliest reference to Dapto, according to Bill McDonald, is that of surveyor Knapp in 1829. The Wollongong Council Local Studies Library Card Index, however, has a reference to a claim that a local Aborigine claimed the word "Dapto" was not Aboriginal. Unfortunately, the page reference to McCaffrey proves, in this instance, to be faulty and I have been unable to confirm or deny the strength of this source.

I suspect, however, that it is just such a comment that the word is not an Aboriginal one that has sparked the rash of fanciful claims that the word is derived from the English
“Dab-toe”, supposedly a reference to an old Aborigine with a permanently disabled foot.

Thanks to the forebears of Christina Stead’s step-mother we can now be slightly more confident that the Aboriginal word for Dapto probably originally had three syllables and that the middle syllable is likely to have contained the labio-dental ‘b’ or ‘p’.

CHRISTINA STEAD AND 1980S WOLLONGONG

Using my exquisite filing system, I recently decided to seek out the original article which sparked my interest in Christina Stead’s Wollongong Connections. I felt sure I would have saved it.

Of course I couldn’t find it anywhere, but after whinging to my wife that I was certain she’d lost it on me, the wayward article miraculously did turn up in one of her files. It turned out to be by a writer for whom I now have some admiration, Barry Hill (whose spirited defence of the ABC’s radio programme ‘The Listening Room’ has long impressed me). The article was entitled “Christina Stead at 80 says love is her religion”, (SMH, Saturday, July 17, 1982, p. 33; coincidentally July 17 is Stead’s birthday; she was born in 1902) was not quite as savage as I’d remembered but it did labour the suburban angle a bit much for my taste:

“I met her at her sister’s place near Wollongong where she has been staying for the past two months: a suburban house in a most suburban street, one of those brick cottages on the ledge between the high, dark escarpment that surmounts the coal, and the pounding light of the Pacific.”

Unfortunately, Hill does not give the address of this residence. It should, however, be possible to find out.

WHERE DID ‘WEETA’ LIVE?

Hazel Rowley states in her biography that:

“After Stead’s departure from Canberra, her life darkened. Back with her family, she was ‘shovelled about’, as she put it, form one relative to another [Stead was notoriously irascible]. She felt she was a burden on them all. First she stayed with David and Doris, then