

Report on August Meeting

Michael Organ, in his address on Saturday, 3rd August, 1996 pleased us all with his remarks that the indigenous people of Illawarra were judged to be peaceful by comparison with others, particularly on the Tablelands. Even so, for other reasons, such as the establishment of an administrative centre and to promote law and order, an official presence was necessary and it had tentative beginnings at Red Point (Port Kembla) in 1828. A garrison was established. It was victualled by Charles Throsby Smith with some difficulty, and the site of the garrison was transferred to Harbour Street, Wollongong, a more advantageous location in many respects.

In size, the garrison remained modest and it was not until 1835 when the town of Wollongong was officially gazetted that, in terms of numbers, it became significant.

Governor Burke was the founder of Wollongong and it was during his term of office that a town plan was adopted, land sales occurred and harbour works undertaken.

The Wollongong Stockade became a landmark. It comprised a complex of timber buildings on a very small scale serving as offices, a guard house, court house, and living quarters for Army and convict personnel.

The Government relied on convicts to undertake its program of public works. Settlers worked with assigned convicts.

Transportation of convicts was in its closing phase. There were grizzly statistics of punishment of offenders and their living conditions, but little in the way of serious crime. Fines, placing in the stocks and lashings/floggings (even for misdemeanours) reflected a harsh society.

A reproduction of a watercolour by Westmacott of the Illawarra Stockade was most enlightening.

Mr Organ convinced us all that Wollongong was on the move, but in the early 1840s there was a slow down because of the prevailing economic condition of the colony. However, that was short lived as our next speaker will no doubt emphasize.