

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Looking back, this has been a very interesting and satisfying year for me. Beginning with the C T Smith bicentenary reunion in March, the year seemed to flow on from there.

Our programme of speakers began on a high note with Dr Joseph Davis at the annual dinner in March sharing his insights into the escapades of Frieda Lawrence and their connection with the content of her husband's books. A high level has been maintained throughout the year, providing lots of interest and variety. Most of these addresses have been reviewed in our Bulletin so there is no need to detail them here. Arising out of our May meeting, I can report that although Michael Tracey's book on the

Dumaresq was finished some time ago, it has not yet been published.

In 1988 the bimonthly Bulletin arrangement finally settled down, with a Newsletter for February and five other issues beginning with March/April and ending with November/December. It is proposed that this pattern be continued in 1999, but with one minor change: a reduction from 20 pages to 16 per issue. More feedback from members would always be welcomed by the Editor.

During the year I have represented the Society on several committees, first and foremost being the Old Court House committee which is moving towards restoration of the OCH which will become a Heritage Centre under the umbrella of the City Council and the National Trust. Along with another Society member, Geoff Mould, I took part in a City Council committee aiming to commemorate the Mount Keira Tramline, but that seems to be out of steam for the time being. I have also attended meetings of a university-based committee seeking a grant for collection of oral history of Illawarra.

The Society has also become a life member of the Friends of the Old Court House but so far I have not taken part in their meetings. However our museum curator arranged for the Friends to hold a fund-raising cocktail party at our museum in November. This very successful event did a lot to encourage co-operation between the Friends and the Society, a trend which I sincerely hope will continue. Having Joyce McCarthy and

Jacqueline Shaw as members of both organisations is a big help. Another happy event at the museum was a two-hour visit from 57 members of the University of the Third Age (U3A). This arose from an invitation issued when I addressed the U3A with the aid of the Society's slides of early Wollongong. The appreciation of the museum expressed by these two groups of visitors gave great encouragement and satisfaction to myself and other members of the Society who attended.

Mention of the U3A talk reminds me that since March '98 I have addressed 14 different associations on behalf of the Society, most of them on the history of early Wollongong.

One of the perquisites of office is the receipt of invitations, especially for civic events. A couple of these worth mentioning were the opening of the Wollongong Entertainment Centre and the Lord Mayor's reception for the local Commonwealth Games athletes. One spin-off from the latter event was that by talking to Louise McPaul and her father, John, we pieced together enough information to confirm later that Louise and I are related: My gggf James McPaul (my mother's great-grandfather) was also Louise's gggggf. How big a generation gap is that? Looks like 2g's! That discovery really made me feel old, which could be one of the reasons why I am not standing for re-election at the AGM. It has been a great privilege to serve as president and I thank the members for it, but for the sake of the Society it really it is time for a change.

Frank Osborne