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## REPORT ON FEBRUARY MEETING

### Surveyors, Settlers and Land Grants in Illawarra

Here is a brief summary of the subject matter covered by Frank Osborne in his address to the February meeting:

Charles Throsby was the first to occupy land in Illawarra, which took place some time during the year 1815. The Sydney Gazette of 18 March of that year had made mention of good grazing land at Five Islands, albeit impossible of access other than by sea. Motivated by a drought which was decimating his stock at Glenfield, Throsby aided by his employee Joseph Wild and Aborigine Broughton, who had knowledge of the area, cut tracks from Appin via Bulli Mountain to reach the coast. He caused a stockman's hut and a stockyard to be built near the freshwater lagoon which then existed in what we now know as Lang Park, in Wollongong.

In April 1816 a military detachment led by Lieutenant Parker found its way via Throsby's hut to Five Islands Point as it was known later. Short of food, Parker was able to commandeer *a bullock belonging to Mr Cribb* who was almost certainly overseer for David Allan, who doubtless had a stockyard there to protect cattle in Aboriginal territory.

On 17 June 1816 Surveyor Meehan arrived to begin a general survey which he commenced from Throsby's hut. Although delayed by two spells of bad weather, he managed to work as far south as Perkins beach at Port Kembla before running out of supplies and being withdrawn by Surveyor-General Oxley. On his visit, Oxley had marked a *Honey Suckle Tree* somewhere south of what Meehan erroneously christened *Tom Thumb's Lagoon*. [Meehan's Field Book No. 119.]

Whilst at Five Islands Point (now known as Hill 60) Meehan made observations that settled for all time the position of Throsby's hut by giving the name of *Throsby's Point* to Wollongong Head. Combined with Dowd's reproduction of Meehan's map of Throsby's Point, the evidence for the location of Throsby's hut is irrefutable. [B T Dowd: First Five Land Grants in Illawarra, IHS 1960, opp. p.1.]

On 28 September, 1816, speaking of the Five Islands district, Governor Macquarie let the world know, via the Gazette, that *several gentlemen have removed their cattle thither*.

On 16 November, 1816, the Governor, again through the Gazette, gave notice that 'grants will be allotted' at Throsby's hut on 2 December 1816 and, by letter, instructed his surveyor-general accordingly.

On 27 November, 1816, Meehan returned to Illawarra. Resuming his general survey, starting from Oxley's marked honeysuckle tree, he worked his way around Lake Illawarra to the *Macquarie River*, surveying for some distance along this stream, near which he found and used a nameless hut. By 2 December, the day of the historic meeting at Throsby's hut, Meehan began his survey of Captain Brooks's grant. In the process he mentioned *Brooks's Hut*, *Brooks's House* and *Brooks's Farm*, indicating that Brooks and/or his men had already been in occupation for a considerable period, not only of grazing stock but possibly clearing and cultivating as well.

In turn, a day for each, Meehan surveyed George Johnston's grant on the north side of Macquarie River, and Andrew Allan's directly across the river on the south side.

Back at Oxley's honeysuckle tree, starting from David Allan's nearby stockyard, a day sufficed for David Allan's grant and another day for Jenkins' grant to the west, these two grants sharing a common boundary stretching from Allan's Creek to Lake Illawarra.

Meehan thus measured the five grants within a week, no doubt helped by his earlier general survey work. Paradoxically, Charles Throsby did not apply for a grant, simply grazed his cattle for five years before removing them to Bong Bong, now Moss Vale.

In brief, two major points have emerged from this study: That the Throsby's hut plaque was put in its rightful place in 1954 at the corner of Smith & Harbour Streets; and that most of the first Illawarra land grantees were well and truly in possession before the official allocation and survey.

The meeting at Throsby's hut was Macquarie's way of bestowing official sanction on what had already happened. In effect, it opened up the valuable lands of Illawarra for further grants.

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