
REPORT ON OCTOBER MEETING.

Speaker: Kevin Gillis.

Subject: Clover Hill, Macquarie Pass.

'Clover Hill', nestled on the slopes of Macquarie Pass national Park, is approx 10 km west of the township of Albion Park. It was part of a dairying community that consisted of some 17 small farms. The area was surrounded by bush and because of the location just below the escarpment had views of the ocean. Bird life was abundant and the water falls provided crystal clear water.

Carl Weber, a road engineer and surveyor, mapped the route of Macquarie Pass in 1894. The official opening of the Pass took place on 4th July 1898 and was celebrated with a banquet at the Commercial Hotel at Albion Park.

The Thomas family were one of the early settlers and worked for Henry Osborne of Marshall Mount. John Thomas became a storekeeper in Shellharbour. He married Maria Haslam and had a family that included John Jnr and Harry. Harry took up farming at "Clover Hill" in 1894 and John Jnr bought 'Clover Hill' in 1898. Harry bought the property in 1915 for his son Kenneth, who, with his brother, built the Blacksmith Shop and, Ken on his own, the Stockman's Hut at the rear of the Illawarra Museum. Besides dairying many other enterprises were carried on, such as timber getting and market gardens.

In 1954 'Cover Hill' was sold by Ken Thomas to Benjamin Turner. Ben, an Englishman, became in 1932 a world record parachutist. After arriving in Australia in 1938 he was offered employment in manufacturing parachutes. In 1943 he formed the Turner Parachutes Pty Ltd and produced over 80,000 parachutes during WWII employing 140 people. He and his wife retired to 'Clover Hill' to set up a theme park, but due to lack of finance his dream never saw light of day. During his lifetime Ben Turner was a parachutist, inventor, manufacturer, pilot, artist, author and a colourful identity of Albion Park and Shellharbour areas. Benjamin Horace Turner passed away aged 91 years at 'Clover Hill' Manor House in 2001. 'Clover Hill' area is now under the control of NSW Parks and Wildlife Service and access is denied.

Compiled by J Herben from material supplied by Kevin Gillis.