
REPORT ON JUNE MEETING.

Speaker: Betty Woods.

Topic: Balgownie - its history and the museum.

Though the topic seemed not very interesting to those who did not live there Betty Woods gave a fascinating talk about Balgownie and especially museum. The museum started life as an air raid shelter which was extended over the years to provide more exhibition space. The museum is situated in the Balgownie Primary Public School grounds. The museum is run by a committee made up from local citizens. In 2003 the Department of Education appointed Betty Woods to manage the museum and catalogue all its artefacts which included a large number of school photos as well as photos donated by the citizens of Balgownie. Betty, in her own time, compiled a CD of most of those photos. She showed us an album of the photos on the CD. Most impressive!

It was noted that Balgownie was established as a mining town due to the Mt Pleasant Colliery. This mine began in 1862 and closed in 1936. After this the town was surrounded for the next few decades with three abattoirs. These employed a lot of people some of whom lived locally. After the government changed the laws re slaughtering in suburban areas the town became virtually a dormitory suburb. Being close to Wollongong and with transport improved the population became more centred on the city. During the 1950s and 60s immigrants settled in the district resulting in Balgownie becoming larger and larger. For the last 20 years the number of town houses and villas has grown steadily accompanied with a steady growth in population. People are now working farther away than ever before. The result is that Balgownie for the last 50 years has remained a dormitory suburb free from factories.

Having resided in Balgownie for about 20 years I have noticed the ever so slow changes occurring. This type of progress may be intrusive to some, but overall it is acceptable and cannot be avoided.

JH