

REPORT ON FEBRUARY MEETING.

Speaker: Courtney Puckey.

Topic: Life, Family and Work in Wollongong'

Our February meeting had a most mysterious visitor - a man assuming the guise of a deceased man, Courtney Puckey, and he acted as if he was well and truly alive. His suit and accessories were old-worldly as was his manner of speaking. He was keen to tell us all about himself and brought along his own questions.

He was sometimes called 'a man of action'. Not content with owning the large estate by the sea and orchards at Batlow, he also worked in Crown Street as a pharmacist and optometrist.

Courtney Puckey was about 30 years of age when he came to Australia from Cornwall. There he had been involved with salt-making. He spent a short time in Gosford before coming to Wollongong. Here he indulged his passions of making not only salt but also concrete. His estate must have been quite an industrious environment but it would have been tempered by the lovely gardens and above all it was a family home for his wife and three daughters Mary, Selina and Grace.

The main house on the estate was "Seafield" a grand house with large verandahs where the family could enjoy the view of the extensive gardens. After Courtney Puckey's death in 1944, the house went to rack and ruin. In 1958 Council met to decide its outcome - it was to be knocked down. The land was still kept and it later became an annexe of Wollongong Botanical Gardens. Tours of Puckey's Estate are organised by the same visitor.

After all this information, accompanied by much merriment from the audience (which at one stage doubled as a council meeting), the visitor's real name was revealed: - Mr Michael Connor, the Education Officer at Wollongong Botanic Gardens.

Margaret Bradley

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