Kim Phillips, the ANZAC historian and editor of the Spirits of Gallipoli, will be a guest speaker at Wollongong Library on 14 October 2013.

To read some of the stories visit the Illawarra Remembers Blog

REPORT ON OCTOBER 2013 MEETING

Speaker: Helen Laidlaw
Topic: "The Gardener’s Gamble" - The Dawson Family

Our October speaker, Helen Laidlaw, presented a very enjoyable and informative talk on the history of the Dawson family. Helen’s great, great, great grandfather, John Dawson, a Lincolnshire gardener, at the age of forty seven arrived in Australia with his wife Mary and eight children on the Canton in 1835. In her talk Helen referred to the history of the family and their experiences as they settled into the colony and established themselves despite some early hardships.

Helen’s talk was accompanied by numerous images, stories and notes supported by a considerable amount of research which is documented in her book The Gardener’s Gamble published in 2010. Her research for the book was carried out over a period of twenty years resulting in a detailed and comprehensive publication drawing on a wide variety of family papers, diaries, journals, letters and many other sources.

Of particular interest are the connections the Dawson family have with Australia’s colonial history. In her presentation Helen outlined how the Dawson family, over many years, were associated and linked with a broad cross section of pioneer families across a number of locations including Sydney, Camden, Kiama and Jervis Bay. They were active in commercial trade and in a wide variety of professions such as farming, legal, medical and engineering and were involved in setting up such important institutions and activities as schools, hospitals and agricultural shows.
The Dawson family is linked with the history of immigration and settlement in NSW over several generations. As Helen appropriately pointed out in her very interesting talk, this family history is really "A Social History of Australia through the Dawson family".

**OVERLAND TO WOLLONGONG (Part 2)**

*This is an edited version of an article in the Illustrated Sydney News, 15 May 1871, page 11,14.*

Thus:- Beginning from Wollongong, the distance to Bulli is eight miles; from Bulli to the top of the mountain is three miles; from there to where Bottle Forest Road joins the old road, one mile (from this junction I know not why, the measuring commences); and from here to the seventeenth mile-post makes the twenty-nine miles from Wollongong - a fact worth knowing. We found this very disheartening, as you will perceive as my narrative proceeds. Just before reaching this post we passed over a cut-away boulder of free stone, and I think this is the first of the few pieces of the road that has any claim to being made.

3.35 - Passed the sixteenth mile-post.

3.45 - Young horse knocked up. Harnessed the old rogue, and after some little difficulty and thrashing we got him along at a walk by leading.

4.30 - Passed the fifteenth mile-post. Just here are several pinches, formed of broken freestone. Horse jibbing, rushed him at them, and succeeded in mounting them by leading and pulling him up.

After much delay caused by our refractory old horse, at

5.35 - We passed the thirteenth mile-post and two bogs, in one of which we stuck.

5.50 - Changed horses again, ... leading Charley, the old horse, for a mile or two.

6 p.m. - Passed the twelfth mile-post; more bogs, ... Mr B leading the young horse, the former going pretty well until about 7 p.m., when we reached somewhere about the tenth mile-post. It was getting dark; and not wishing to lose more time than could be helped, we determined, not knowing what obstacles yet stood in the way, to walk forward.