MARCH 2014 MEETING

Speaker: Paul McCosker
Topic: Restoration of “Wilgendene”

The speaker at the Annual General Meeting on 6th March 2014, Mr Paul McCosker, with help from his young son Jack, provided a very enjoyable presentation on the Restoration of “Wilgendene”. This fine old residence was restored by Paul McCosker himself and is located at Jones Place, Corrimal. The home was built in 1889 and was originally called “Wilgendene” but was known for many years as “The Villa”. It is a late Victorian Italianate style of architecture featuring a tower and verandahs. In his talk, Paul indicated that when he purchased the residence in 2001 it was in a derelict state having been neglected for many years; he then described how he set about its restoration and the process of having the Development Application approved by Wollongong City Council, which was a lengthy process. The DA included restoration of the tower block and verandahs.

APRIL 2014 MEETING

Speaker: Annette Williams
Topic: The Path to Progress

Wollongong City Council has joined other Councils in the Local Government Research and Practice Development Consortium with the University of Wollongong. The Consortium accepted Annette’s research application which gave her the opportunity to contribute not only to her work team but also to other planning teams within Council. Annette works as an Environmental Strategy Officer within the Project Delivery section of Council’s Infrastructure Strategy and Planning Division. The significance of her thesis is to understand the penal involvement in the road establishment of the area between 1825-1845.

Local historians and maps indicated that the Old Dapto Road built around 1824 began at Wollongong Harbour and ended at Mullet Creek near Dapto via Coniston (shown blue on the map below). It joined the current alignment of the Princes Highway near Spring Hill until nearing Mullet Creek. The research also includes the Main Road to Dapto which was built by convicts in 1834. This road commenced at the corner of Keira and Crown Street Wollongong and followed the Princes Highway via Mt Keira Road, West Wollongong to Mullet Creek (shown pink on the map below).

Roads serve a number of purposes. For local communities they provide ease of movement for people and for goods and raw materials. They can also serve governments that wish to strengthen their control of an area. The existing tracks were proving inadequate for the growing community, and the colonial government identified the Illawarra as a suitable centre for convicts.

At the centre of Annette’s research is a road known as the Old Dapto Road. Little is known about the road south of Wollongong and the central question to the thesis is ‘Who built the Old Dapto Road?’ Of course this question raises other questions such as: Why was it built? How was it built? When was it built? Where was it built? What was its route?