"THE ROMANCE OF THE ROAD."

The following summary has been prepared by Rev. Bro. J. P. O’Malley (Hon. Research Secretary) from the notes of Rev. Fr. J. J. McGovern, who addressed the Society on the above subject on 4/11/48.

The fact that the early Governors until Macquarie were Naval men accounts for the comparatively small mileage of road making in the early colony of Port Jackson.

The first settlements clustered around what is now Circular Quay but it was soon found that if the infant colony was to become self supporting, land more suitable for cultivation than the rocky precincts of the Cove would have to be found.

This lead to the settlement at Rosehill where the first attempts at cultivation proved a failure.

In 1798 a proposal was made by Sir Joseph Banks to send Mungo Park, the celebrated African explorer to N.S.W. for the purpose of exploration.

So impressed were the authorities by the impassable nature of the country that the convicts were given comparative freedom to attempt escape by land. A party of convicts was even victualled and given a leader by Governor Hunter to assist them in their desire to find a way to China by going south. By the time they reached Camden the party was reduced to three.

Much loss of time and energy occurred because of the fact that Parramatta and later Prospect were the bases from which all attempts to push communications west were made. On February 11th, 1802, George Caley started on his first journey from Prospect to the "Cowpastures."

Macquarie, the "Building Governor," could be well named the "Roadmaker." The importance of the fertile areas around Camden
and Airds advised the Governor to give his personal attention to the development of this part of the colony. A drought in 1812 made action imperative. Earlier in 1810, he had marked out the site of Liverpool named after the then British Prime Minister.

Along this road an important colonist had received a grant of land from which a journey was to be made which proved the first communication with the South Coast by land. This was Dr. Charles Throsby's "Glenfield" grant between Liverpool and Campbelltown.

The speaker reminded his audience that George Bass made the first overland journey from the Cowpastures in 1803 to a point on the coast near Wattamolla. A map from the "Historical Records of N.S.W." showed Bass' journey.

In 1815, Dr. Throsby was told by some aboriginals at Liverpool that there was plenty of grass and water in the Five Island district, and the Doctor decided to investigate. He formed a small expedition of a couple of white men and two natives. The party reached Appin and arrived the following morning at the top of the mountain range behind Illawarra, making a track as the journey proceeded. They camped the night on the top of the mountain and next day began cutting a track down near the locality of the present Bulli.

The audience followed the lecturer's description of places with greater interest because of the fact that two recent excursions had made them familiar with the Glenfield and Parramatta districts.

The settlement at Illawarra in 1825 had a population of 372 men, 98 women, 43 boys and 49 girls. Bishop Polding rode from Campbelltown to Wollongong in 1838. "This tract of country" says the pioneer Bishop "called Illawarra is extremely beautiful. You travel on high land till you come to the range, and you stand on the edge of a precipice upwards of 1,500 feet high. Down this the late Governor has cut a winding road."

In his "Autobiography" (P. 81) Dr. Ullathorne describes the amazement with which he heard "the settlers' clock, a species of kingfisher that lives on snakes." (Kookoburra).

On the same ascent is the celebrated hollow tree to which I once conducted Dr. Polding for shelter from heavy rain; it kept us and our horses perfectly dry, and there was still room enough for two more horses."

It is worthy of note that the Misses Osborne and Mr. W. Parkinson know the particular tree—now destroyed.