ST. MALO AND HUNTER’S HILL EXCURSION:

Thirty-six members and friends enjoyed this memorable excursion. Our thanks are due to Dowsett Engineering Co. for their kindness in allowing us the freedom of the grounds of the lovely old home, “Loch Neil”, and to the National Trust authorities for their co-operation in permitting us to inspect St. Malo outside the usual hours.

We print the following extracts from “Some Family History” by Mr. P. J. B. Osborne, as being of considerable interest to our members. “Some Family History” was an address delivered to the Canberra and District Historical Society in April, 1958.

My great grandfather, Henry Osborne, of Marshall Mount, Lake Illawarra, was the youngest of ten sons of Archie Osborne, of Dinaseer in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland.

Two of his brothers, Alec and John, also migrated to New South Wales and it was at the suggestion of one of them that he sold his farm and came out to try his luck in the Colony, the prospects of which appeared to be good; especially as the bleak Ulster countryside compared rather badly to the glowing reports of the new land.

Henry Osborne arrived on 9th May, 1829, and gained a little experience and advice from Captain Thompson, of Liverpool.

He obtained a grant of land from the Crown of 2,560 acres and the right to twenty or thirty free labourers.

He at first took up dairying and got his first cattle from W. Home, of Glendee, Campbelltown, and registered the brand “H.O.2”.

He was a typical thrifty Ulsterman descended from Yorkshire, probably about the time of Wentworth when the North of Ireland was colonised by him in Cromwell’s time.

His coming here was quite romantic as he married my great grandmother, Sarah Marshall, a parson’s daughter, at the last moment before leaving, and then only owing to his ship having been dismasted and having to put into Belfast for repairs. The Rev. Marshall had
previously declined to grant his daughter's hand owing to doubts about the prospects for a young married couple in the very remote new colony, but he relented when Henry returned for another try. Henry was in such a hurry to get back to his Sarah that he left the draft for £3,000 which was the proceeds of the sale of his farm, and his "all" hanging up in the pocket of his overcoat in an hotel in Belfast. His joy can be imagined when, on his return with his bride, he found it intact where he had left it. He then converted it into its value in linen, which he had consigned aboard his ship to New South Wales, selling it for a fine profit upon his arrival.

Henry Osborne built himself a good house on his land at Lake Illawarra, naming it Marshall Mount after his wife's family, and set to work on his property and breeding up his herd of cattle. Marshall Mount is still there and lived in.

He took a lively interest in public affairs and it is recorded that in 1834 he was on the list of magistrates in Illawarra.

Early in the eighteen-thirties he bought the property Avondale from Alfred Elyerd, which was a grant of 500 acres made about 1823. The old homestead, near Dapto, is the pride of its present owners. It was lived in for many years by one of Henry Osborne's sons.

In 1833, the trustees of the late Captain Richard Brooks sold Barrengarry, which was the name of the principal holding in the Kangaroo Valley, usually referred to in those days as the Kangaroo Ground, to James Osborne, who was probably my great grandfather's brother.

James Osborne subsequently sold it to Henry Osborne, who used it principally for dairying and then converted to the breeding of beef cattle.

After Henry Osborne's death in 1859, his eldest son Henry ran the property for a while, handing over to his brothers Alex and Bert. It was during the time of the latter that this estate suffered heavily at the hands of free selectors and was spoiled from the Osbornes' point of view.

A Mr. McCaffery ran Barrengarry for my great grandfather and it was during his time, in 1846, that the well-known "Butter Track" was opened from Kangaroo Ground via Marshall Mount to Wollongong. This narrow track rose up from near Barrengarry to the top of the cliff near Robertson, and along the cliff edge, crossing the present Macquarie Pass till it plunged down a spur to Marshall Mount. During the last war this track, one of the few means of access from the coastal strip to the tableland apart from the regular passes, was of great interest to those responsible for the defence of the country in case of a Japanese landing.

Marshall Mount is close to, and looks down over the good lands at Albion Park, which were owned by Samuel Terry Hughes, who was the son-in-law of the famous Sam Terry who had taken this land up amongst other commercial exploits in the Colony. Sam Terry had the honour of coming to the Colony as the guest of His Majesty.

Henry Osborne had long wanted to buy Albion Park. There was, however, some ill-feeling engendered by the disappearance of a celebrated white bull which H. Osborne had bred and which was reputed to have lost itself in the pastures of Mr. Terry Hughes' estate. In the end, he was able to buy 850 acres right against Kiama.
Very hard times persisted in the late 1820's and it was only the pretty-well-endowed who were able to weather the storm. It was in 1831 that Henry O'Brien moved from Illawarra to the Yass Plains and apparently solved the problem to some extent by "boiling down" operations which he is said to have carried on there. This man may have had some influence on the subsequent migrations of Henry Osborne, for a number of O'Brien properties came into the hands of my family.

In October, 1843, Henry Osborne gave a free exhibition of his imported cattle in the Market Square of Wollongong. This laid the foundation of the present-time A.P. & H. Societies in Australia. It was followed up and gradually turned into a regular show. In 1841 he imported a roan cow named Brutus, which was said to be the best cow ever seen in Illawarra in the old days. Henry Osborne was largely interested in coal lands in Illawarra and elsewhere and it took an Act of Parliament to deprive him of the land upon which West Maitland now stands.

He and his family worked many of the coal measures and he brought out a man named McCabe, who was a mining engineer, to operate them. This man married a daughter of his and the family became a parallel one to my own. McCabe's son Harry lost his life in an act of great heroism during a bad accident in a mine and was responsible for saving the lives of a number of his men.

It is said of Henry Osborne by McCaffery, whose father was with him from 1841, that "had he lived the allotted span of life he would have been by far the richest man who ever settled in Australia". He was naturally very clever, keen and immensely energetic and above all he was successful. He died at the age of 56. The Osborne Memorial Church at Brownsville, near Dapto, is in his memory.

The herds which he had put together were carried on by his executors till 1872 when they were sold. Thus passed one of the finest dairy centres in Australia.