THE SYDNEY MAIL — 11th NOVEMBER, 1865:

Strike Amongst the Miners.—Tuesday’s “Illawarra Mercury” says: The whole of the men employed at the Mt. Keira mines have struck work, in consequence of a refusal on the part of the proprietor to increase their pay one penny per skip. All the hands at the Mount Pleasant mines are also off work. The result of this is that two vessels, which arrived for cargoes of coal, cleared out and sailed yesterday for Newcastle.

THE GIANT FIG AND THE VERSATILE CABBAGE-TREE
(From Abraham Lincoln’s “Australian Sketches” (c.1840) — manuscript in Mitchell Library).

This drawing gives a view of part of the Lake in this beautiful district, a rich alluvial flat with the Macquarie River running through it, also a sketch of the gigantic “Figtree” seen in no other district to such perfection — it grows frequently 8 feet in diameter and 200 ft. high. It is a parasitical plant, and in many respects resembles the “Banyan” of India — its leaves are large and glossy, and its fruit affords a good supply of food to the wild pigeons and flying foxes (or vampires) — the lateral roots or spurs sometimes run along the surface of the ground 15 to 18 yds. on all sides of the parent tree, before they disappear and, close to the trunk, they form complete walls 4 to 5 feet high — the spaces between them which, with simple roofs, are often converted into useful sheds.

The “Cabbage tree palm” is one of our most serviceable trees — it grows to 18 inches diameter and to 130 feet in height — with the trunk we form posts and rails when cut into proper lengths — the inside is a sort of sweet pith, and is very favourite food with pigs. From the leaves we obtain the best material for thatching; and the strong fibrous substance which binds the leaves to the trunk is most useful in the shape of brooms, hundreds of which are forwarded to Sydney for sale. The 3 or 4-pointed leaves on top are the ones from which the celebrated “cabbage tree hat” is made. Our housekeepers use the “heart” of the palm heads both in its raw state, when it eats something like cocoa, and also as a pickle. The soil on some of our alluvial flats is from 10 to 15 ft. deep of rich blackcolour.

SPEAR-FISHING AT RED POINT IN 1823
(From “Journal of an Excursion to the Five Islands and Shoal Haven”, by Barron Field).

Wednesday, 22nd October. Rested this morning, and in the evening went to see the natives fish by torchlight. They make torches of bundles of bark, beaten and tied up, and with the light of these scare the bream into motion that lie among the rocky shallows, when they either spear them with the fiz-gig, or drag them from under their hiding-places with the hand, bite their heads, and throw them high and dry on the shore. The sight is very novel and picturesque — the torch being flashed in one hand and the spear poised in the other — though there were but few natives here at this time, the majority being absent feasting by no means attribute this to chance, but to the kind providence of the spirits of their fathers, whom they believe to be transformed into porpoises (dolphins) after death, like Bacchus’ pirates in Homer, and who, in that shape, drive the whales on shore. With this view, the natives obsecrate the porpoises by songs, when they see them rolling. I found also that the aborigines of New Holland were strictly divided into two classes, the hunters and the fishers; and that they did not dare to encroach upon each other’s mode of gaining a livelihood. Red Point of Captain Cook was the scene of our torch-fishing. Much of the rock was flat, and veined in squares, as if it had been paved, seemingly the effect of iron and fusion. Captain Flinders says, the cause of its being named Red Point escaped his and Mr. Bass’ notice, but it was plain to us that the iron gave it a reddish appearance.

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