SUBJECT: MEMBERS' SLIDE NIGHT.

Following our usual practice for the last few years, we again invite members and friends to show their slides — preferably those of a historical nature or dealing with the Society’s activities, but any slides will be welcome.

The usual limit of twenty slides per member will apply, and will be enforced without respect of persons, fear or favour, affection or ill-will.

After the showing we invite you to be the Society’s guests at supper.

As this will be the last Society function for the year, the President and Council extend to all our members unable to be present their best wishes for a merry Christmas, a most enjoyable holiday season and a happy and prosperous New Year.

NOVEMBER MEETING:

There was a good attendance of members and friends, including a number of local members of the A.R.H.S. and other railway enthusiasts, to hear Mr. C. C. Singleton, Honorary Research Officer and a Past President of the Australian Railway Historical Society, who gave us a most interesting and entertaining informal talk, based on a well-chosen selection of slides, on railway history in Illawarra. Mr. Singleton has promised us a more formal account, which we hope to publish in whole or part at a later date.

EXCURSION:

Members, friends and children, 28 in all, spent a most enjoyable and interesting day at Jamberoo on Sunday, 24th November. A full report will be given at the earliest opportunity.

WOLLONGONG SHOW DAY, 1849:

(From Colonel Mundy’s “Our Antipodes”)

On the day preceding the terminaton of our sojourn at this little Brighton of New South Wales, the town was enlivened by an event of considerable local importance, namely, the annual exhibition of the Illawarra Agricultural Society. All the beauty and fashion of the county attended. Among the more interesting products of the soil there were not wanting a few particularly fine looking "currency losses;" and there were plenty of long-legged, cabbage-hatted, tweed-coated sons of the same soil, much more worthy of the name of corn-stalks than the undersized native-born denizens of the Sydney streets and grog-shops. The show of vegetables was remarkably good—as good as any in the world probably; and the flowers, although less remarkable, evinced a creditable desire on the part of the settlers to embellish their dwellings; for a well tended flower-garden is one of the surest, and certainly a very pleasant indication of competence, leisure, and taste.
The Market-green just opposite our inn was allotted for the exhibition of live stock, amongst which were some well-bred cattle of the Durham race, and more than one "good cut of a horse." Among the rest, was "Diamond" by "Cantator," as handsome a steed "as one could wish to throw one's eye or one's leg over"—for such was the remark of an old loiterer, who it was easy to see had lived among horses all his life.

"Sweet little mare of yours, Sir, in the stable there. Do you know how she was bred?"

"No," said I, "she is not my property, only lent to me by"

"I know all about her," interrupted he triumphantly. "I can show you a picture of her dam and her dam's master, Sir!" And, as we were going the same way, he pointed out to me a sign over a large inn, representing Governor Sir Richard Bourke mounted, in full uniform, on a chestnut charger. "Do you see the white hindfoot? but she was an English imported huntress, twice the strength of her filly."

All this of course I thought was what is called at sea a "yarn;" but it was all true, for "Nelly" had been lent me by a son-in-law of Sir Richard's, and he confirmed the old "breaker's" story when I mentioned it to him.

The little quiet village hotel was converted for the nonce into a noisy tavern, reeking with spirits, beer, and tobacco. I dare say our excellent host put more money into his pocket this day by bar-custom alone, than accrued to him from our fortnight's patronage. It was very thirty weather—very sultry, very dusty—some excuse for profuse ingurgitation of malt liquors, ginger beer, &c.; none for the really frightful consumption of ardent spirits by the men, young and old, and for the consequent rapidity with which many of the lords of the creation reduced themselves to the level—ininitely below the level—of the beasts they came to exhibit and inspect, to buy and to sell. I have descanted elsewhere upon the wild drinking bouts of bushmen, and of the sums squandered therein.

The persons assembled here had probably no accumulated wages to veer away upon, but, in default of this, every bargain, every meeting, greeting, and parting was solemnized by liberal libations; not, as will be readily believed, poured out upon the dusty earth in honour of the gods, but down throats that must have had all the dust in them laid long before. The usually cold and undemonstrative Englishman warmed up as ale or rum dictated. They shook hands, laughed; d—d each other's old eyes and limbs, (the acme of British and brutish cordiality;) and slapped on the back and "treated" each other over and over again. Paddy was himself, undiluted by expatriation—what more need be said, when a fair was going on? Even Sandy's habitual caution was at fault—at least in one instance; for a tall, rawboned lowland gardener, at least fifty years old, forced a quarrel upon a strapping young Swedish sailor, whose torn shirt and fiery eye betokened previous cuffs and combats; and the result was, that the Caledonian got well thrashed, and was carried off by his one-eyed wife.

Of the business transactions which came under my notice, take the following instance:—A chestnut colt was the object; two countrymen the actors. After much chaffering, half-whispered half-aloud, and a good deal of unsteady mutual fondling—for they were both very far gone in what Mrs. Butler calls "a state of how-came-you-so?"—he would-be purchaser muttered a proposal into the bushy whisker of the seller.

"No, I'm blessed if I do!" cried the latter.

"Will you split the difference?" pursued the buyer.

"I will not," responded the other, "but I'll tell you what I will do. I'll take six pounds down, and drink a sovereign of it now with you, my son!"

Upon this the worthy and ingenious couple vehemently shook hands, and dived together head-foremost into the bar.

At different periods of the day their progressive career was forced upon my notice. When they parted at dusk it was evident that the liberal seller had considerably more than fulfilled his treaty and his treat. The purchaser, after sundry attempts at mounting his new acquisition, which stood as steady as an iron-bark fence—attempts which reminded one of "vaulting ambition," and certain equestrian feats at Astley's—at length got safely away. His disconsolate friend kissed his hand several times to him as he departed; and after looking around with a maudlin and bewildered air, laid himself down by the rails and fell fast asleep.

Caledonian got well lthrashed, and was carried off by his one-eyed wife.
At night the Market-square looked like a field of bottle; but it is only fair to the conservators of the public peace of Wollongong to record the fact, that before we retired to our couches there was a general collection of the killed and wounded—and I may add prisoners—by the constabulary, under the orders of an important functionary in a blue coat and gilt buttons, black velvet vest, red face, and black and tan terrier. The last objects having reference to the Illawarra Agricultural meeting that my eyes closed upon were a brace of disorderlies in handcuffs meandering under escort to the lock-up; and an utterly insensible seaman, proceeding in a wheelbarrow to join his vessel—and ours—in the harbour.

MR. OSBORNE MEETS A BUNYIP (1871):

A Supposed Gorilla. — The following particulars have been supplied to us by Mr. George Osborne, of the Illawarra Hotel, Dapto, concerning a strange looking animal which he saw last Monday and which he believes was a gorilla. It is to be hoped successful means may be adopted to capture the animal (alive if possible), as it is quite evident it is one of the greatest natural curiosities yet found in the colony. Together with the interest attached to the peculiarity of this strange "monster in human form", there is something very remarkable and suggestive in the fact that he should have presented himself to Mr. Osborne while that gentleman was going his rounds, collecting the census. The following are Mr. Osborne's remarks concerning the animal:— On my way from Mr. Matthew Reen's, coming down a range about half a mile behind Mr. John Graham's residence, at Avondale, after sunset, my horse was startled at seeing an animal coming down a tree, which, I thought at the moment to be an aboriginal, and when it got within about eight feet of the ground it lost its grip and fell. My feelings at the moment were anything than happy, but although my horse was restless, I endeavoured to get a good glimpse of the animal by following it as it retreated until it disappeared into a gully. It somewhat resembled the shape of a man, according to the following description:— Height about 5 feet, slender proportioned, arms long, legs like a human being, only the feet being about eighteen inches long, and shaped like an iguana, with long toes, the muscles of the arms and chest being well developed, the back of the head straight, with the neck and body, but the front or face projected forward, with monkey features, every particle of the body except the feet and face was covered with black hair, with a tow-coloured streak from the neck to the abdomen. While looking at me its eyes and mouth were in motion after the fashion of a monkey. It walked quadruped fashion, but at every few paces it would turn around and look at me following it, supporting the body with the two legs and one arm, while the other arm was placed across the hip. I also noticed that it had no tail. It appears that two children named Summers saw the same animal or one similar in the same locality about two years ago, but they say it was then only the size of a boy about 13 or 14 years of age. Perhaps this is the same animal that Mr. B. Rixon saw at the Cordeux River about 5 or 6 years ago. The query is, 'Where did it come from?'

SHOOTING A LINE, 1839-40:

(We tell these tales which are (maybe) true
Just by way of convincing you
How very little, in the agent's trade,
Things have changed since the world was made.)

(Apologies to Rudyard Kipling).

WOLLONGONG

J. T. WILSON

Has much pleasure in announcing to the Australian World, that he has received instructions from the Proprietor to dispose of, by Private Contract, and if not shortly sold, to bring to the hammer on an early day, of which due notice will be given.

A BEAUTIFUL COTTAGE
erected on a half-acre allotment in the flourishing and daily increasing