Speaker: MR. PHILIP GEEVES.

Subject: THE TICHBORNE CLAIMANT.

Mr. Geeves is a well-known radio personality and lecturer, who can be relied upon always for a lively and informative talk. His subject is the Wagga butcher, Arthur Orton, who improved a shining hour of poverty and obscurity by answering a newspaper advertisement as to the whereabouts of a wealthy English heir, and laid claim to his estates. Accepted by the mother, if rejected by the remainder of the family, he did very well for himself for a long time, convincing half England of his genuineness. Unfortunately, however, the judge and jury eventually proved to be amongst the unbelievers, and he was convicted of perjury.

The moral is that though crime does not pay, a truly resourceful impostor can make the good part last much longer than the bad, and even the bad is probably no worse than the wrongdoer would have suffered anyhow.

SEPTEMBER MEETING:

Members and friends turned out in force on September 1, when Mrs. Loma Ruddock of Canberra spoke on "Joseph Wild, First Constable of Illawarra". An interesting innovation was the use by Mrs. Rudduck, an experienced A.B.C. speaker, of broadcasting technique, by having the various quotations, as they occurred in the course of the talk, read by the President.

Joseph Wild arrived in New South Wales on the transport "Ganges" in 1797, under sentence of transportation for life. His crime is unknown; for although assizes were held at the place and time (Chester, 1793) of his reported conviction, his name does not appear on the record.

In New South Wales he was for a time servant to Robert Brown, the botanist. (By some accounts Brown visited Illawarra in the early 1800's; but Mrs. Rudduck says this is unverified and unlikely). Wild, after receiving his pardon in 1813, was for many years in the service of Charles Throsby. He may have accompanied Throsby when the latter first came to Illawarra, where, in 1815, Wild was appointed Constable, the first to hold the office.

Throughout the records of Throsby's exploring expeditions over the next few years Wild's name constantly recurs, with abundant evidence of the confidence
Throsby reposed in him and the importance of the services he rendered. His great moment came in 1820, when, sent in charge of a small party to investigate aborigines' reports, he discovered Lake George. He was less fortunate in his discovery of Wilde’s Meadow (despite the spelling, named after Joseph, not Oscar). The name testifies that poor Joe was never allowed to live down his too-precipitate report that he had found the happy valley of the convicts’ dreams, with its fine meadows and rippling fields of wheat, which turned out to be reeds rippling in a swamp.

Wild was in charge of the road gang which constructed the difficult section of the original Southern Road over the Cookbundoon Range (Macquarie named it Wild's Pass in his honour). It was from him that the Governor obtained "four very pretty young emus ... and a very little rock kangaroo" to take back as presents to his little son Lachlan.

For his services Wild received a grant of 100 acres in the Sutton Forest district, but sold it immediately. This refusal to own land was one of a number of characteristics which led Mrs. Rudduck to surmise that he might have been a gipsy — that the affinity with the Australian bush and its creatures, and with the aborigines, which Wild seemed to have developed spontaneously may have been simply the expression in a new setting of the ancient characteristics of the Romany people.

Joseph Wild died in 1847, aged 88, and was the first person buried in the churchyard at Bong Bong, where he is described on his tombstone as "Authorised Explorer".

OBIITUARY:

We regret to record the sudden death of Mr. David Owen, a member of one of the district's best-known families, on whose history he gave an address to the Society some time ago. The Council and members extend their sympathy to his widow and family.

"HISTORY OF CAMPBELLTOWN" — By W. A. BAYLEY, F.R.A.H.S.

(Obtainable from the Town Clerk, Campbelltown; price $2.89 posted)

So far as Illawarra is concerned, the subject of Mr. Bayley's latest book is of particular interest because of its close connection with this district. In the earliest days, and again for thirty years when Campbelltown was our railhead, our land links with the outer world were through Appin and Campbelltown, and much of the road traffic in and out of Illawarra uses the old route now.

The Campbelltown district is rich in historic associations and historic buildings, and fortunately its transformation into an outer suburb, satellite city, or whatever it is to be, was delayed until people had come to appreciate such things. The National Trust, the State Planning Authority, and, one is glad to be able to add, the Municipal Council have taken action to ensure the preservation of the best of Campbelltown's visible history.

Further, the Council rightly determined that its history should be well and adequately written. They put the job into experienced and capable hands, and did not fall into the common error of trying to do it on the cheap. The book is excellently produced, and the illustrations are numerous and well-chosen. As for the text, Mr. Bayley needs no recommendation to our members; it is sufficient to say that in accuracy and thoroughness it is worthy of the subject — one of Australia's most historic districts — and of his own reputation.

AND, SPEAKING OF LOCAL HISTORIES . . .

There was a Shire Council (NOT Campbelltown) who decided to have their history written — all their neighbours had done so. But they had observed that the historians seemed to think that they could have run the Council better than the Councillors. To avoid this they got all their rate and minute books and put