MACQUARIE SESQUICENTENARY

First Governor to Visit Illawarra

The year 1972 marks an important anniversary for Illawarra for it marks on January 15 and 16 the 150th year since the first Vice-Regal visit to the Wollongong area — Five Islands District as it was called in those days.

By January, 1822, Macquarie’s term as Governor since 1810 was drawing rapidly to a close yet he saw fit to make the effort — and effort it was indeed in those days — to make the arduous journey to the coast, which was reached through Campbelltown and Appin.

Nobody was ever open to criticism (except that they achieved nothing) who had made no attempt to contribute to the progress and well-being of the people. Because Macquarie, far more energetically than most, had done much for the progress of the young colony of New South Wales, his last years of governorship were marked by the enquiry on behalf of the British Government by Commissioner Bigge, as a result of which he was recalled.

Notwithstanding Bigge’s findings, Macquarie’s whole term is well summed up by Arthur W. Jose, Historian of Australasia, in the words, “... no other Governor so shaped for good the destiny of New South Wales”.

Posterity has found that much of the work of Macquarie has stood the test of time. It is to be regretted that nothing bearing the mark of Macquarie was left in Illawarra as has remained in so many other centres.

FEBRUARY MEETING, Macquarie Sesquicentenary:

The usual screening of slides from the Society’s collection will follow the business of the annual meeting.

This year, however, they have been specially taken for the occasion — colour slides of the route through Illawarra taken by Governor Macquarie as it appears today.

The road followed by Macquarie down into Illawarra from Appin has recently been definitely established by researches made by Mr. W. G. McDonald and others.

Throsby cut the first track down the mountain in 1815 to bring down the first cattle and that became the road into the district, a packhorse track down which it was almost impossible to ride.

That track descended from the top of the mountain just south of the elbow on the present Bulli Pass. That was the route described by Macquarie himself in his Journal.

After rising at daybreak, Macquarie’s party sent back the vehicles and put the baggage on three packhorses. Cornelius O’Brien joined the party as they set out just after 6 a.m. They passed along “some very bad road”, crossed the “Cataract River near its source” (the present Loddon River, of course) and arrived “at the summit of the great mountain,” where, he wrote, “we were gratified with a very grand magnificent bird’s eye view of the ocean, the 5 Islands...”
"The descent was very rugged, rocky, and slippery... it was with great difficulty that the packhorses could get down this horrid steep descent..."

It took them one hour to come down the 1½ miles and another 1½ miles took them to the mouth of Slacky Creek on Bulli's beach, where they had breakfast. Macquarie named it Throsby's Creek, but like most names given on that tour it was forgotten.

(The names may well be revived. — Ed.).

They followed the beaches to the mouth of Tom Thumb Lagoon — now the Inner Harbour mouth — thence to Red Point, where was Allan's farm, where Port Kembla now is and where a great gathering of aborigines welcomed Macquarie.

Macquarie noted that he ascended the hill at the east — now Hill 60 above Red Point. From there he looked upon the islands and the beach towards Shellharbour and notes that he saw "the grand sheet of inland water or lake called Allowrie or Illawarra..."

From there he went to Berkeley hills ("Mr. Jenkins's), then through

LAKE ILLAWARRA FROM BERKELEY

Lake Illawarra from Berkeley almost as Macquarie saw it.
— From a watercolour by Georgina Lowe, c 1840s.
"Mr. Brooks's" (Exmouth on the west shore — Ed.) and "to Mr. Brown's establishment situated on the western bank of the lake".

There the party spent the night.

Wednesday, January 16:

The packhorses were sent direct from the east of Dapto to O'Brien's Road, which leads up the ridge westward from the Fig Tree.

Macquarie and the party skirted west of Lake Illawarra until they reached the "Macquarie River" (Rivulet, today) and followed it up until they reached a steep hill, where Marshall Mount House now stands, naming the peak "Mount Throsby" and climbing it to see the panorama to advantage.
The party descended the hill at noon and spent until 2 p.m. riding through the hinterland to "O'Brien's new road", but Macquarie did not mention Figtree in his diary.

He stated that they rested at a fresh water creek and took 1½ hours to ascend the road which follows the ridge from the fig tree until it reaches O'Brien's Gap. The road follows a ridge which drops away on each side and from which extensive views are obtained. It is worth the dangerous and steep drive today.

From the top, which Macquarie named Mount Brisbane, the party traced their way behind Mount Keira through what is the Cataract Dam catchment area today to reach Jordan's Pass and Appin, thus ending the tour.

MACQUARIE EXHIBITION AT THE MUSEUM

The highly successful picture exhibition entitled "Wollongong Past and Present" was supplemented on January 15 by the map showing the route taken by Macquarie through Illawarra and the places named by him, and a series of large pictures specially taken for the occasion depicting places passed by Macquarie on his journey.

The exhibition will continue through the holiday season and members are advised to take the opportunity of re-visiting the Museum Exhibition to see the changes of the 150 years since the great day when the first Governor visited Wollongong.

MACQUARIE LEAVES NEW SOUTH WALES:

Macquarie's tribute to his successor, Governor Brisbane, who arrived in the colony on November 17, 1821, was the naming of Mount Brisbane to the west of Wollongong marked on maps as Mount Burelli.

Shortly after his Illawarra tour Macquarie handed over the reins of government to Thomas Brisbane and left for England on February 15, 1822. He died on July 1, 1824.

MACQUARIE SESQUICENTENARY MARKED AT BULLI:

A monument to mark the passing 150 years ago of Macquarie was erected at the intersection of Hobart Street and the Princes Highway at Bulli in the corner of Bulli Public School grounds by the school authorities and committees.

It was fittingly inaugurated by Mr. W. G. McDonald, Past President and Councillor of our Society, on the day preceding school break-up for mid-summer vacation.

MUSEUM DESCRIPTIVE LEAFLET

Adult visitors to the Museum are now welcomed by presentation with leaflet descriptive of the exhibits to be seen, as well as details of hours and admission charges.

The Society's meetings and subscriptions are also set out. The back page carries a description of the Illawarra Region, whilst both back and front carry fine sketches of the Museum itself, an historic building of Wollongong.

Credit for the very fine production goes to a committee including Mesdames Shaw and Mackreth and Mr. Fleming.

Ask for your copy when next you visit the Museum.