POSTSCRIPTS TO THE SEPTEMBER MEETING:

As one of the many who enjoyed Bruce Pennay’s fresh “Approaches to Local History,” I would offer these comments on the two problems raised in the third paragraph of the President’s report of the meeting:

1. Why did Thirroul play Rugby League? I don’t know, but probably because the players preferred the game. The question so put, however, implies that this code of football was the only one played. One theory advanced was that Thirroul was a railway town, but it also had its colliery (Excelsior) along with the other purely mining towns. Another comment was that as the community was predominantly from the north of England they brought League with them. This is fair enough, except that “Association” football (Soccer) is also very strong in northern England (vide Liverpool Everton, Manchester City/United, Sheffield Wednesday/United, etc., etc., “The Big Match” on A.B.C. and “Star Soccer” on commercial channels).

And so it was at Thirroul, which had its senior side until some twenty years ago, and still supports numerous junior teams.

From 1888 to 1928 a knockout competition (called the Gardiner Cup) for senior teams, based on the famous English F.A. Cup, was conducted in New South Wales, the winners being regarded as the premier side of the State. In the long history of this competition Thirroul was the only Illawarra side to win it—in 1928, its last year, their record being:

- Defeated Helensburgh 1-0.
- Received forfeit from Corrimal.
- Defeated West Wallsend 3-2.
- Defeated Pyrmont 3-0 (at Bode’s Oval, North Wollongong, the only time the final was played locally).

Other Illawarra teams which reached the final of this prestigious competition were:

1899: Balgownie Rangers, defeated by Pyrmont Rangers; score unknown.
1901: Balgownie Rangers, defeated 1-4 by West Wallsend.
1910: Helensburgh, defeated 0-2 by H.M.S. Powerful (a Royal Navy cruiser on the Australian station).
1924: Woonona, defeated 0-3 by West Wallsend (44 clubs entered).

To-day Woonona is the home of Safeway United and Balgownie is still a major force.

It will be noted that West Wallsend (which won the Gardiner Cup most often—seven times) consistently contributed to the downfall of the Illawarra clubs. In Newcastle football they have retained their popular name, “Bluebells,” also borne by Thirroul. The Rugby League club to-day, still playing in blue and white, are “Butchers”!

Incidentally, Rugby League was not played in Illawarra till 1911, and it was only by a twist of fate that the premier football code was not that played in the southern States, transcending marital, political and religious loyalties: Australian Rules!

2. How did Cringila get its name? Again I don’t know, but suggest that it might have come from the provision by the Railway Department of a small platform to serve the construction of the A.I.S. works; and the
Railways, known to have a predilection for aboriginal names, might have used the “local” name.

In 1936-37, when the works were well established, a small group of civic-minded men were fighting to have the name of the area immediately west of the No. 1 Blast Furnace Plant (the present Cringila) changed from “Steeletown” (was that ever official?) to “Belvedere Heights”!

If Bruce’s was not a rhetorical question, it is a sad commentary that after thirty years a society such as ours, with its primary object the recording of history, cannot answer the question. Therefore I am starting a project—the preparation of a Roll of District Place Names with their derivations. Any assistance will be thankfully received and faithfully employed!

—A.P.F.

A P.P.S. TO THE SEPTEMBER MEETING:

Still on the question of the name of Cringila, some research in the Reference Section of the Wollongong Library revealed the following:

The station is not marked on the parish map dated 24 September 1925, nor does the name appear anywhere in the vicinity; but C. A. Irish includes it in his “Names of Railway Stations in N.S.W.” (R.A.H.S. Journal Vol. 13, 1927; originally published as a series of articles in the Labor Daily, January-November 1926).

The annual report of the Commissioner for Railways has a section “New Works,” and a table showing income and expenditure for each station. There is no reference to Cringila for either 1925-26 or 1926-27. As far as I could see it makes its first appearance in the latter table in the 1935-36 report.

Irish says Cringila means “pipeclay.” So do some later lists of aboriginal words, but in at least one of these the compiler lists Irish’s article among his sources, and they may all be simply following him. Bailliere’s N.S.W. Gazeteer (1866), in its entry for Charcoal (Unanderra), says: “There is a black lead pit (unworked) near the Cordeaux River, and one of pipeclay on the coastline. From the latter the aboriginals were wont to obtain their mourning paint. Pipeclay in the aboriginal tongue, being called “illowra,” is said by some to have conferred the name ‘Illawarra’ on the district.”

BUT a list of words collected by John Brown of Brownsville from Queen Rosy in 1890 has “Five Island Hill. I I low r a, savage men,” and gives the word for pipeclay as “gubbitch” or “gubbutich.” (The library has only a xerox copy of a faint original manuscript, and one cannot swear to the spelling).

(As usual when an abo name is involved, everything is now as clear as the atmosphere over Cringila when something has gone wrong with the precipitators. Over to you, Mr. Fleming!—Ed.)

LOCAL SOCCER STARS:

In June/July 1974 the world championship of soccer football was held in West Germany and for the first time Australia qualified for the final sixteen. Over 100 nations entered. The squad of 22 players contained three from the Wollongong club, Safeway United: Peter Wilson (Captain), Adrian Alston and Max Tolson, and to these representatives of the district we offer congratulations.

—A.P.F.