SOME NOTES ON ABORIGINAL PLACE-NAMES:

[Mr. Stanley Denniss of Keiraville recently presented to the Society a manuscript notebook formerly the property of his brother, the late Mr. David Denniss, the author of many articles on the history of the district, particularly of Dapto and its neighbourhood. The following extract from the notebook is reprinted as a matter of interest. It should be noted that Mr. Denniss did not vouch for the correctness of the interpretations; and as far as this Bulletin is concerned all warranties are expressly excluded, the editor's conviction being that, as with some other varieties of expert witness, one expert on aboriginal names can always be found to swear against another.

The "Centenary of Illawarra" presumably refers to the centenary (in 1896) of the landing of Bass and Flinders, which was commemorated by the erection of the old bandstand whose stone base was afterwards converted into the monument in Market Square].

Aboriginal Names and Places

At the centenary of Illawarra the Honourable George Thornton, M.L.C., who was regarded as one of the best living authorities on the language of the aborigines, forwarded to Mr. Archibald Campbell, then the district member, an interesting communication dealing with Illawarra district names. He considered that the native rendering of the names and their meanings should be of particular interest. Mr. Thornton added that he had a good knowledge of the names of the places 40 or 50 years previously when he used to camp out among the blacks about Wollongong, Kiama and Jervis Bay, but his memory of these things, not having been exercised in recent years, had faded a good deal. Added to this was the fact that the aboriginal dialects differed very much within 70 or 80 miles. For example, the language of the Sydney and Botany Bay blacks was quite unintelligible to those of Kiama and Shoalhaven. A similar difference was marked in north, south, east and west.

[After listing some names in the Sydney suburban area, the manuscript continues:]

Bulga further south means a mountain. Bulli means two, the name being applied to a certain formation in the mountain range about there. Of the names Bellambi and Dapto his memory had failed him as to the aboriginal meaning.

Illawarra as expressed by the natives should be pronounced "Elt-warra" which means a pleasant place.

Wollongong should be pronounced "Woolyungah" which he thought meant "five islands."

Kiama should be "Kiaremia" which indicates fish may be caught from the rocks there.

Minnamurra or Minna Murra meant, he thought, plenty of fish, which doubtless were obtainable in the tidal part of the estuary.

Gerringong he had forgotten the meaning of.

Coolangatta signifies the highest land.

Meeinderry is the native name of Greenwell Point, Shoalhaven.

Moonah is the native name of the inside of Jervis Bay and Booderee that of the entrance between heads.

Cooroombong is the name up the estuary at Jervis Bay, which has been corrupted to Currumbene Creek.
Wandiwanian means the home of lost lovers [Any comment, Mr. Beale?—Ed.].

Berrewerri means a crossing place.

Ulladulla is a corruption of the native name Wooladooh which means a safe harbour or safe place from the rough sea.

It might be mentioned that the native name of the wild fig was coorawool.

BACK TO CRINGILA:

Apropos of the notes in the November Bulletin, our good friend Mr. Fred Gregory of the Newcastle Society writes to say that the official list of railway stations in New South Wales dated 1st May 1928 refers to “Cringilla” (so spelt) on the Wollongong-Port Kembla branch (Illawarra).

(Mr. Fleming reports that No. 1 Blast Furnace blew in in August 1928).

NOVEMBER MEETING:

Probably the most complete recorded story extant, supported by slides and a wealth of personal knowledge by the speaker Mr. K. V. Mathews, B.A., M.Ed., of his subject “The Tramway in the Bush,” entranced our members for the full time available to him. The need of a large dam for water conservation, and eventually to feed the then projected Murrumbidgee Irrigation System, had long been discussed by the N.S.W. Parliament from about 1880. When all preliminaries for such a major engineering project were completed, the construction act passed and necessary finance forthcoming, the order was given to commence work. Construction of Burrinjuck Dam, the location selected, literally began in 1908 with the completion of the “Bush Tramway” or mini-railway, which connected the Main Southern trunk line at Goondah to the dam site, and over which all the required personnel, materials and machinery were transported. Mr. Mathews senior was Station Master at Goondah and our speaker as a boy was therefore fully informed on all that occurred on this small railway. The line was 26 miles long, and from Goondah traversed initially undulating country until approaching the heavily timbered and mountainous terrain near “Barren-Jack” (as it was then known), which demanded extremely short radius curves, justifying the two-foot gauge adopted. The line also included extension spurs to facilitate the haulage of firewood for the Power House, and river sand for the mixing of concrete.

Four locomotives were built by Krauss and shipped from Germany, whilst the rolling-stock, consisting of passenger cars, flat and side-tipping trucks, was designed and built at “Biloela” (Cockatoo Dockyard). The dam, which was constructed in the granite mountain spur at the Murrumbidgee River gap between Barren-Jack and Black Andrew mountains, was completed in 1928, after which the Railway was sold and dismantled. The modern access load now traverses part of the old permanent way. One of the four locomotives, “Robin,” was purchased and used in the Kiama Quarry system for many years. Fortunately two of these remarkable little engines were rescued for posterity by the Goulburn and N.S.W. Rail Transport Museums.

—F.B.T.