SNIPPETS FOR LOCAL HISTORIANS:

1.—Origin of the name “Dapto.”

Hoping that this note will excite editorial comment, I may point out that information given to me by a great-aunt who used to sit on the knee of her grandfather, Charles Throsby Smith, is to the effect that the name “Dapto” referred to a man who had lost a toe, though I cannot recall how this happened, except that an axe performed the operation. Indeed, my aunt always pointedly pronounced the word, according to its origin, as Dab-toe, just as she would speak only of Udanderra and Para Creek. So for myself I would always need convincing that the origin was otherwise. But that is not to regard except with respect the opinions of Jervis and our Bulletin Editor, both of whom incline to a native origin.

Even so, I have just come across what I consider to be a valuable piece of corroboration. Australia’s first great geologist, Rev. W. B. Clarke, travelled through Illawarra, it will be recalled, at the turn of the year 1839 to 1840. His diary is both full and fascinating. Under date 9 January 1840 he says this: “Mt. Dapto is not a native name. I understand it was so called from a man cutting off his toe with a hatchet.”

Clarke was a skilled and scientific observer. His statement can be reliably accepted as accurate reporting, though that does not necessarily make the information given to him correct. But it would make me demand convincing evidence to rebut this. So, over to the experts —E.B.

[True enough, I have inclined to the theory of a native origin—mainly on the authority of John Brown of Brownsville, who quoted apparently with approval—certainly without demur—“a correspondent some time ago” in the Town and Country Journal: “The western portion of the Hooka lands towards West Dapto . . . was called by the aboriginals ‘Dabpeto’ hence the name of the settlement Dapto. The meaning of the word ‘Dabpeto’ is ‘water plenty’.”]

This was written in 1893; but John Brown was then about 64, had lived in Illawarra from his infancy—Alexander Stewart saw him as a baby in arms—and at Brownsville since 1834 or thereabouts. He was interested in the local aborigines, and apparently had some knowledge of their language.

Clarke’s diary certainly takes the “Dab-toe” theory further back than any other source I have come across. It is an impressive piece of evidence. Yet, firstly, “dab” does not seem a natural word for such a drastic operation; and secondly Brown must have heard the story, and if it was true would have rejected the alleged aboriginal meaning. So I too remain unconvinced.—Ed.]

ANNUAL REPORT:

As members were previously notified, it proved impossible, owing to blackouts and power restrictions, to print the thirtieth Annual Report. There was therefore no Bulletin, in its usual form, for either January or February.

Duplicated copies of the Annual Report were distributed at the Annual General Meeting, and are available for collection at the Museum.