OBITUARY:

With great regret we record the death on 14th July, after a long illness, of Mr. A. P. Fleming (Patron and Honorary Life Member).

Mr. Fleming's funeral took place at Beresfield, Newcastle, on 16th July. At the same time a memorial service was held at Wesley Methodist Church, Wollongong, the large attendance including many members of the Society. Mrs. M. Howells and Mr. F. B. Tier were among those who, at the request of the officiating minister, spoke of Alec's character and his work for many organisations and causes. The spontaneity and sincerity of these tributes were deeply impressive.

Mr. Fleming is survived by his mother, Mrs. A. Fleming of Hamilton, Newcastle, to whom the Society extends its deepest sympathy.

The Late Mr. A. P. Fleming

This Society has never suffered a greater loss than that of Mr. A. P. Fleming. A list of the offices he had held—President, Vice-President, Hon. Secretary, Hon. Treasurer, Bulletin Editor, and for over thirty years a Councillor in one capacity or another—would show that his services had been outstanding, but would be only half the story.

Alexander Patrick Fleming (Patrick was the name of his mother's family, well-known in Newcastle and neighbouring districts) was born at Wallsend on 6th November, 1917. He lived as a boy at Minmi and Greta, and attended the local public schools and East Maitland Boys' High School. Times were hard, and family circumstances would not allow him to go as far at school as his abilities would have warranted; but he was not one of those whose education ceases with their schooldays. After securing his Intermediate Certificate he worked for some years in Newcastle, before coming to Wollongong in 1936 to join the staff of Australian Iron & Steel Limited. He remained with the company for the rest of his life, qualifying as an accountant and holding several responsible positions, including that of Secretary of Corrimal Coal & Coke Limited when that company was taken over by A.I.S., and Internal Auditor.

In December 1944 he attended the inaugural meeting of the Illawarra Historical Society. In a most fortunate hour for the Society, he was "shanghaied" (his own expression) into becoming the foundation Honorary Secretary (1944-49)—and the Society's most loyal and devoted member. He was President for one term only (1960-1961), refusing to let himself be renominated, despite repeated urgings. The office which he held longest was that of Honorary Treasurer (1951-57, 1968-70 and 1972-75), in which capacity his professional competence combined with his devotion to the interests of the Society made his services invaluable.

But, as already said, that is only half the story. Alec was never satisfied merely to perform the routine duties of whatever office he was holding at the time. He kept a vigilant eye on the Society's membership, never missing a chance to recruit a new member, never allowing an old one to drop out without a struggle. He undertook the responsibility of keeping Bulletin mailing lists up to date. He organised many excursions, making it a rule to go over the ground beforehand if humanly possible. He frequently acted as a guide to visiting Societies. He undertook such odd jobs as clearing the mail-box. In short, whenever something needed doing that was no
one else's particular responsibility, he did it, and everything he did was done competently, thoroughly, and without seeking publicity. All these services, and his services to other organisations, were performed even though for most of his life he had to overcome physical disability (a legacy of polio as a boy) and ill-health. At last, early this year, he had to admit that he was unable to continue in office (being, we know now, in all probability already mortally ill). His unique services to the Society were recognised at the Annual General Meeting by a unique distinction, when it was decided to appoint a second Patron, and he was unanimously elected to the position. This expression of appreciation, we are glad to know, gave him great pleasure.

He was frequently a speaker at Society meetings; and any meeting where he was to speak was certain to be well attended. He was the author of innumerable Bulletin contributions, and of a number of booklets on local historical subjects, some published by the Society, and others at his own expense. His last work, "The Wollongong Pilot Service, 1840-1867" was actually in the press at the time of his death. His talks, papers and publications were distinguished by meticulous accuracy, the product of careful and detailed research carried out with the same conscientious thoroughness as everything else he undertook.

His interests and his services to the community were not restricted to this Society. He was a member of Lodge Aubrey Halloran Lewis, of several societies connected with railway and maritime history (the former, a lifelong interest, engendered perhaps by his father and grandfather having been engine-drivers) and of numerous other bodies. For several others he acted as Honorary Auditor.

It is no disparagement to the many others who have contributed to building up this Society to say that it is, in a special sense, Alec Fleming's monument. He will be remembered no less for his integrity and conscientiousness, for the individuality and humour which expressed itself in many idiosyncratic turns of thought and speech, and for his kindness and unobtrusive generosity. The Society has lost its best worker; we have all lost a good friend.

SAVE YOURSELF SOME INCOME TAX!

A letter from the Deputy Commissioner of Taxation to the Hon. Secretary:

Dear Sir,

INCOME TAX:

ILLAWARRA HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM FUND

With reference to your letter of 3 June 1975 you are advised that gifts of $2.00 and upwards to the above Fund are allowable deductions for income tax purposes in terms of section 78(1)(a)(xxvii) of the Income Tax Assessment Act. The reference number of the Fund is AF.1595C SF.2720 and donors should quote this number when making a claim for deductions for gifts to the Fund.

Yours faithfully,

(R. R. Gray)
Deputy Commissioner of Taxation

Intending benefactors please note.