THE FREE LIBRARY:

The Wollongong portion of the Free Library was opened to the public yesterday for the first time. Several persons entitled to obtain books from the Library attended on the occasion, as did also a considerable number of visitors. The number of volumes in the portion so opened are considerably upwards of 600, the selection on the whole being good and useful works. And after having paid for that number of books, the Council have still a balance of money in hand, wherewith to purchase a further supply. North Illawarra has upwards of 200 volumes in the library, and that portion of the institution is also now open as well as that of Wollongong. According to the number of volumes already procured by the Wollongong Council out of their share of the Government endowment, the collective number of books to be provided by the three Councils as proposed should not be less than about 2000 volumes. The establishment of such a vast and valuable store of useful knowledge, freely open to the public, should and will be of incalculable advantage to the community. The Free Library matter has dragged its slow length along for a provokingly lengthened period, but two portions of it are now opened, and the opening of the other portion will probably soon follow. Better late than never.

—Illawarra Mercury, 18 July 1876.

CELESTIAL FISHERMEN:

A party of Chinamen, six in number, have taken up their station on the banks of the Illawarra Lake for the purpose of carrying on fishing operations. They arrived by the Friday morning’s boat from Sydney. Their stock of provisions, &c., which made a full four-bullock load, were taken out the same day. There have been several attempts to carry on the fishing business on the lake by Europeans, but, we believe they have always been given up as unremunerative. The moderate expectations of Chinese, their great industry, and small cost to them of living, will, no doubt, render the business sufficiently profitable to them. At Melbourne and Geelong, we believe, large numbers of Chinese earn a living by catching and curing fish, which they dispose of to their fellow-countrymen on the diggings.

—Illawarra Mercury, 17 January 1859.

A NEW ARTICLE FOR EXPORTATION—Five fishermen (Celestials) have set up a pavilion in the neighbourhood of Wonona Point, where they may be seen day after day collecting large quantities of the mutton fish† which they boil, salt, and pack in barrels ready for exportation to Sydney, whence they will be forwarded to China. If we may believe the story told by these fellows, a pound of the preserved flesh of the mutton fish is worth four shillings (or their equivalent) in the China market.

—Illawarra Mercury, 31 January 1862.

†—“Several large and small species of ear shells (Haliotidae) ... cling to rocks like limpets. Also called mutton-fish in Australia, these shells have their equivalent in the ‘paua’ in New Zealand ... and ‘abalone’ in America ... The animal makes good eating if beaten like steak before cooking, and if cut into dice and dried it may be used for stews.”—Australian Encyclopaedia.