THE G.O.M. IN ILLAWARRA:

Facetious friends used to introduce Mr. G. O. Martin Smith, as "the G.O.M."—not altogether inappropriately, for, on the evidence of his diary of "A Holiday Trip through the Illawarra District . . . New Year, 1893," he had no discernible sense of humour, was addicted to highly moral platitudes, and could become, as Disraeli said of the other G.O.M.,' inebrated with the exuberance of his own verbosity. There is no evidence that the resemblance went any further, and Martin Smith is entitled to the benefit of the doubt. And, if he had been less verbose and less of a Pommie ("sufficiently colonized" he himself called it), he would probably have omitted many details, commonplaces to Australians in his own day, which fill in the picture eighty years later.

He begins his narrative at No. 1 Platform of the old Sydney station (he calls it Redfern, but its inner or City end was just beyond the outer, ends of the present platforms) where he and his friend George Pat the caught the 1.25 p.m. train on New Year's Eve. "The cars were not of the most modern construction, and one would judge that they dated early railway history." (The line from Sydney to Kiama [now Bombo] had been open less than five years—from the beginning "the Cinderella line of the State" was the dumping ground for senile rolling-stock).

"One could not help being struck with the extensive and healthy suburbs which skirted the line on either side for miles, and it was some time before we could say with any degree of truth, we are in the country." However, they made it—at Tempe—and "the beauties of nature commenced to display themselves more fully at Como . . . One really envies the boating parties . . . At Waterfall the cars were lighted up in readiness for our run through the tunnels, which commenced immediately upon leaving the station" (Old No. 1 Tunnel, just south of Waterfall, has been opened once—but the brick recesses are still visible in the eastern wall of the cutting).

The luxuriant vegetation of Helensburgh, Lilyvale and Otford receive due comment, then came "one of the longest tunnels in the colonies" from which "we emerged forth in full view of the ocean and the road-rail skirted a beautiful bay, with the mountains through which we had passed in the rear, and others equally pretentious in front, sloping gracefully to the sea. Stanwell Park is situated in this favored spot, and I could not help remarking that they ought not to need many doctors there." (No one told him that two doctors—preferably, as they used to say, mad doctors—were urgently needed for the owner of the big house, a man of mature years who played with kites and believed it was possible to fly in a machine heavier than air).

Near Bulli, Mr. Martin Smith was anxious to know the name of a clump of tall thin trees growing by the way, and "was informed, much to the amusement of our fellow-passengers (who I may say were all ladies) that they were 'bonnet-pins,' but I believe botanically they are 'Cabbage Palms' . . .

"The church, surrounded by its burial ground, forms a prominent feature at Bulli, and a handsome granite column has been raised as a lasting tribute to the men who lost their lives there through a colliery explosion.

"A few miles further brought us to Woollongong (sic), the principal (sic again) town in the district, and prettily situated on the sea coast.
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a somewhat neglected and stagnant appearance, consequent, no doubt, to the rail communication" (Plus ca change ...).

“Our first concern was to seek out a suitable hotel and were recommended to the ‘Commercial.’ The outward appearance was not at all inviting and surprised us the more when we found that the accommodation they had to offer was really good ... We strolled leisurely down through the town to the lighthouse ... situated at the end of a substantially built breakwater. The sea was comparatively smooth ... but is frequently so rough that it would be impossible to gain access to the lighthouse ... If you remember rightly the lighthouse has been carried away on one or two occasions.” (Mr. Fleming’s researches must have been incomplete, or possibly someone was pulling the new chum’s leg).

“The harbour, I believe, is far too small to admit of large vessels stationing, or to be of great utility, but small craft come alongside and load and unload, which is run down in trucks from the collieries at Mt. Kiera (sic).

2. Past the prominence in the background are situated the fortifications, which of course had intended visiting, but found them fenced in with a notice up to the effect that if we desired to enter we must obtain a written order from the Colonial Secretary or Commander-in-Chief in Sydney.” (After all, Wollongong’s defenders had to be sure the G.O.M. had not brought Olga Novikoff with him) ...

“... We retraced our steps at about 5.30 p.m. for tea, but found some difficulty in knowing where to go. At last we were attracted by a signboard which stated that besides having buggies for hire and a parcels delivery, the occupants were also fruiters and provided refreshments at all hours...

In these country places, the chief rendezvous, especially those remaining in unmarried bliss, seems to be the railway station, so to be in fashion, we repaired there also. Everyone seemed to be quite happy in their own way ... The train having gone, we dispersed with the crowd, retired to rest early. A number of men had gathered at the various hotels, especially the one at which we were quartered, intent on making merry, and we anticipated a rowdy time, but the Salvation Army were on advantage in their expressions, and drowned all opposition, and to our sleepy ears it seemed as if their music (?) was gradually dying away in the distance, or else sleep was putting us beyond their reach.”

1.—Gladstone, then Prime Minister of Great Britain for the fourth and last time. The initials stood (according to Liberals) for Grand Old Man, or (according to Conservatives) for Gordon’s Old Murderer—an allusion to the death of General Gordon when Khartoum fell through tardiness in sending a relief expedition. “Dad’s Army” fans remember that this disaster was ultimately avenged by Lord Kitchener’s Liberal-Corporal Jones.

2.—Rumour had it that Olga Novikoff, a Russian spy of surpassing coquetry and irresistible sex-appeal, had been despatched to England by Czar with orders to sacrifice herself for her country and seduce Gladstone. The Queen was not amused.

(To be continued)
HE G.O.M. IN ILLAWARRA:

Continued from July Bulletin)

Sunday, 1 January, 1893, dawned grey and threatening. Martin Smith and his “worthy friend” George Park decided nevertheless “to venture, come what might, and brave the elements”; but by the time they had breakfasted and got as far on their way as Jubilee Bridge rain had begun to fall. “To our left lay a large tract of meadow land covering the side of a hill and sloping gently to the valley below, upon which stock was grazing and an unpretentious house, surrounded by a clump of trees, added rather than detracted from the beauty of the position. To our right a range of mountains stretched as far as the eye could see before us and ended behind gracefully sloping towards the sea-coast.

“Mt. Kiera [he could never get that right] stood out prominently in the foreground and in the distance Mt. Kembla, our desired haven, was just discernible. Heavy rain clouds rested on the mountains, and shut out much of their outline and beauty. Our way now lay down a hill...[to] a creek, crossed by a bridge with white rails...Why it should glory in the name of ‘Ghost’s Bridge’ is beyond my powers of comprehension, although certainly a ghost might choose [sic] a far worse spot to take up his abode.”

No longer—after what the Main Roads Department have done to the place no self-respecting ghost would be seen dead there).

“This district seems to be almost entirely devoted to dairying pursuits... Numbers of homesteads studded the land in all directions. Boys were seen driving carts containing milk cans to and from the stations, and the numbers I learned are chiefly supplied from the Sobraon training ship and do not oftentimes receive the kindest treatment from their employers, and have work hard...”

...We next arrived at the village of ‘Fig-tree,’ appropriately named from the gigantic fig-tree... It is about four hundred feet high!!!! and causes everything around to sink into insignificance beside it. Although storms have from time to time played havoc with, and deprived it of many of its branches, those that remain spread out over a large area of ground. The trunk stands erect, and like all trees of its kind is flieted at the base. Beneath it are several smaller trees, one of which is called a ‘Flametree’ and peculiar to that district... It was completely covered with a mass of brilliant flowers, with no sign whatever of foliage...”

“Another mile or so brought us to the Unanderra township, which consisted in the main of a few private dwellings, the schools, and on the other side of a creek crossed by a bridge, to our right stood the Council Chambers, and to our left the Post Office... It was little more than a slab hovelpump connected with Wollongong by a single telephone wire.

“In due time we arrived at the ‘Farmer’s [Farmer’s Arms] hotel situated on the other side of the road [between the main-line level crossing and Kembla Grange] and kept by Irish people. Here we decided to sleep that night...I asked the landlady if she could let us have some milk, for which she refused payment, and took the glasses into the yard and milked it straight from the cow, in order that we might have it fresh...”

“We turned in from the road to the right at Mullet Creek Bridge (sometimes called Beach’s river on account of the champion sculler having taken up his residence near it), and wended our way through some swamy addocks to the foot of the hill upon which ‘Farmborough’ it situated. I
feel at a loss to attempt a description of the surroundings.” (He then does so, at considerable length and with many flowers of Victorian eloquence)

“My friend needed no introduction, having been there before . . . I regret very much not having seen Mr. Blackman, who was confined to his bed by sickness; but having been introduced to five of the Misses Blackman, we were assured that that was only a small half of them. Two grand-daughters and a grandson made up the family group . . . I dare not trust myself to allude personally to these good friends, they were all new faces and had their peculiar graces; . . . their very natures and surroundings seemed to have partaken largely of the freshness and purity of the mountain air.” (That and one flower of Victorian eloquence one could not omit!).

“Then came dinner . . . a typical old-country Christmas dinner of roastie beef and plum pudding, etc. The rain ceased in the afternoon, but the ground was far too wet for us to think of going out, so remained at home and passed a quiet but pleasant time together . . .

“Tea being over, we all joined in singing from Sankey’s hymn bookent and sang until we were tired. [What a way to celebrate New Years Dayay, even if it was the Sabbath!]. The evening passed so rapidly that I was surprised when it was time for us to say ‘goodnight’ and start on our walkpec down to the Inn, which we reached soon after ten o’clock. My bed was very damp and George fancied he had all the live-stock in the district in his, but for all that we went to sleep, congratulating ourselves, and much elated on the happiness we had enjoyed, despite the damping tendancy of the elements on this first day of the New Year, 1893.”

1.—A euphemism for reformatory. The *Sobraon*, built in Aberdeen in 1866, and for years one of the most famous ships in the Australian trade, was bought by the N.S.W. Government in 1891 as “a nautical school ship for delinquent boys,” replacing the earlier *Vernon*. (The editor’s grandfather father worked on her conversion). When in 1911 she became a genuine training-ship for the newly-formed R.A.N., her name had acquired such undesirable associations that the Navy changed it to *Tingira*, under which name she served for about twenty years before being broken up.

The practice of using “State Boys”—who were by no means all delinquents—as a source of cheap labour on dairy farms continued long afterwards; cf. Mr. B. E. Weston’s article, “Cowcockying Sixty Years Ago,” in the November 1973 Bulletin.

(To be continued)
THE G.O.M. IN ILLAWARRA:
(Continued from November, 1975, Bulletin)
(The Editor apologises for the unconscionable time he has left Martin Smith and George Park in their damp and flea-ridden beds at the Farmer Arms,

"... a wayside inn,
A low grog-shanty, a bushman-trap",

beside the road leading down from Unanderra to Kembla Grange. We resume the story of their Illawarra tour on the morning of Monday 2 January 1893):

Martin Smith rose from his damp bed at the Farmer's Arms to leave the place that between fleas and crying babies "George had had rather a bad night of it." Breakfast (eggs and bacon) was as rough as everything else about the place, "the landlady telling us everything had been packed up as they were catering for a regatta which was to take place on the lake."

The travellers set out to walk to Shellharbour, being told that there was no train till twelve, and it was only eight miles away by road. They were favourably impressed by "Dapto Church (English)" (as Park's photograph is captioned), "a prettily designed building in red brick with tile roof and surrounded by a well-kept churchyard, edged with shrubs and trees."

"At intervals along the road there were milk depots to which a constant stream of traffic was passing, and it is undoubtedly a land flowing with milk, if not honey . . . As we passed one of the depots, a milk boy commenced calling after us 'Nan, nan!' I was not sufficiently colonized to understand the meaning of this, but was informed that as we had straw-hats on, and goats eat straw, they were calling 'Nan, nan' to come and feast off what is otherwise known as a 'donkey's breakfast.'" (The uncouthness of colonial youth!).

The geography of this day's travels is rather confused. When the considered they had done "a good six miles" from Dapto, they saw the lake through the trees and mistook it for the ocean; then came to a road junction where a sign pointed left to Shellharbour, and showed the distance as five miles; then "trudged on along a road which was perfectly straight and seemed to have no ending" to "a station called Yallah." They thought about waiting for the train, but decided against it, to their satisfaction when they found that "we should have had nearly as far to walk from Shellharbour station as from there." Then, after crossing the line again, they came to the foot of a steep hill, the ascent of which was very trying."

Yallah was then where it is now, though the road crossed the railway way by a level crossing, which from old parish maps appears to have been north of the platform; but where north of Yallah is the "perfectly straight road? The violent curves of the present highway near "Penrose" did not then exist, but Mount Brown Road, the old main road, is far from answering the description. Smith mentions neither Albion Park station nor Albion Park town. The station he might have overlooked, but if they had followed the old main road to the town the hot and weary footsloggers could hardly have overlooked two pubs. Possibly Smith mixed his stations, and called Albion Park "Yallah"—a reversal of history, for Yallah had original been Albion Park!—in which case the interminable straight could have been the "Telegraph Road," the present highway through Albion Park Rd. (Calling Mr. Thomas—did the "Telegraph Road" exist in 1893?).
presumably, they crossed the line again by the Tongarra Road level crossing at Oak Flats, and Smith’s account of their route begins to make sense again.

Having reached the top of the “very trying” ascent, the wayfarers saw a house with “a garden full of fruit trees, the fruit of which was decaying on the ground in large quantities. Being very thirsty I went to the door and asked if they would sell me a little fruit, and a middle-aged man replied ‘No! the grandfather wanted it all for the children.’ I asked him to give me a couple of lemons, pointing to those on the ground, but he would not. . . . Speaking of this incident to Mr. Fell, at the ‘Royal Crown,’ Shell-harbour, he said, ‘Yes, it’s just like him, he’s our magistrate, and if you were taken before him for drunkenness, he would give you a month’s hard labour.’” (No doubt the publican spoke from the bottom of his heart).

However, Martin Smith handsomely adds that the churlish magistrate’s behaviour was “wonderfully contrasted with the openhanded generosity we met elsewhere.”

From the top of the hill they could see Shellharbour, and pressed on. To reach it soon after twelve, noticing on the way a man with a team of bullocks turning over fallow ground. At Shellharbour they rested in a private room at the “Royal Crown” till dinner was ready. “We saw a magnificent collection of shells and cowrys which the proprietor had arranged in a case, and taken a prize for at a local show”; but their own attempt to win collect shells in the afternoon was disappointing, and Smith was “afraid the place has lost to some extent the reputation inferred [sic] by the name.”

Then they watched the finish of a cricket match, when a Wollongong team defeated the locals. “At 6 p.m. we had tea, and just finished in time to see the coach-driver starting off, but managed to stop him.” From Shellharbour station they returned by train, in an “American car” (i.e. of the suburban type, open with tip-over seats) full of canoodling couples.

“When the train stopped at Dapto on the middle of a bridge, we thought we had arrived at our destination, so got out. There was only a narrow space between the footboard of the carriage and the edge of the bridge, which was unprotected, so we got into one of the small recesses built out over the side at intervals, and waited there till the train had gone. . . .”

It turned out that this was a watering point [evidently Mullet Creek bridge] and we could not help smiling when we heard the train stop down the line at Kembla Grange, and no doubt the guard wondered what had become of his passengers.”

The passengers made their way to the Lake Illawarra Hotel, and better railquarters than the Farmers’ Arms. This time the room was “well furnished and scrupulously clean,” and they “never enjoyed a better night’s rest.”

—See Singleton, “Railway History in Illawarra,” for the bewildering changes of station names in this area, by which the original Albion Park became Yallah, the original Oak Flats became Albion Park, and after long disuse the name of Oak Flats was revived for a new platform in a different place.

(To be continued)
THE G.O.M. IN ILLAWARRA:
(continued from August Bulletin)

Martin Smith and Park found the Lake Illawarra Hotel a vast improvement on the Farmers' Arms. The rooms were "well furnished" and "scrupulously clean," the host "genial" and the breakfast "excellent" (the only drawback being that they came down for breakfast at 8 and had to wait till 8.30). Then, recrossing Mullet Creek, they headed back across the paddocks to "Farmborough" and the same hospitable welcome as two days earlier.

A picnic "up McCloy's creek" was suggested, and between eleven and twelve the party set out. "Descending the hill on the opposite side to which we had approached the house in the morning, we had not gone far before I saw the other members of the party darting out to gather what I soon discovered were wild raspberries. They were a good size and very tasty, although as someone suggested, a little cream and sugar would have been an improvement... I could not understand how it was that peach trees were growing around us until it was explained that the flying foxes carry away the fruit from the gardens and drop the stones. One tree especially bore excellent fruit [no fruit-fly then!] and the flying-foxes had already commenced to test if it were ripe."

Then, while they were crossing a creek, someone dropped and broke the milk-bottle, so two of the party were sent off to Barrett's farm for more "She not only sent us milk but some delicate wax flowers, some of which were given to me for a button-hole" [on a picnic!]. Barrett's farm struck Smith as a scene of rural bliss. "There seemed to be something very fascinating in this secluded and quiet mode of living to a stranger, but it evidently tends to make people rather inquisitive, for we could see the old lady standing on the verandah, viewing us with a pair of field glasses."

"Passing along for a short distance outside their boundary, we soon came to McCloy's Creek... I noticed the dog became very excited, and looking along the creek saw a fine iguana, with his head just above water. Before I could get a stick [if it moves, kill it] the dog Victor had disturbed it, and it ran away and disappeared in the bush."

The billy was boiled beside the creek, and "the cloth was spread on the grass and a variety of choice viands set out upon it, which were done ample justice to." (As previously remarked, the G.O.M. could become "inebriated with the exuberance of his own verbosity," and his syntax was not always equal to the strain). Then they packed up the provisions and began to ascend the creek "I felt just in the height of my glory climbing and scrambling from boulder to boulder... and was surprised to find how well the young ladies overcame all obstructions... In a few minutes we seemed to be involved in a labyrinth of beautiful natural scenery... large trees towered up and spread out their branches (which were covered with stag's-horn ferns) above the undergrowth and smaller trees, which were the support of innumerable creepers [and] orchids... The rocks closed in, making our course more narrow and impracticable... We were just nearing the waterfall and the force of water had worn away a deep hole in the rock filled with a pool of placid water. Only the more venturesome spirits ran the risk of immersion... by climbing past on narrow ledges of rock, the rest went up through..."
the scrub and descended to the creek higher up... All along the bed of the creek were seen large sections of petrified wood, so similar, that one could only tell the difference by tapping or feeling the weight of it... We passed another small waterfall where the waters passing over a small cavity, caused a rumbling sound not unlike distant thunder. Our ramble ended at a third, the name of which I should think ought to be Horseshoe Fall. In a recess I saw some very pretty stalactites, and did intend securing some of them but forgot it. [He was no conservationist]... I must not forget to make mention here of a fine bangalow tree growing at the side of the creek... fully three hundred feet high, and judging from the annular rings on the trunk, one would imagine it had taken fully as many years to attain its present height. Its foliage varies, but in other respects its growth is similar to that of the cabbage palm."

Returning to their starting-point they boiled the billy for afternoon tea, then made their way back to Farmborough for an evening meal to which Smith complains he could not do justice because he "had had (to borrow an expression) such an elegant sufficiency beforehand."

After tea they planted some looted orchids and ferns, and wandered round the garden, where Smith’s Pommy heart rejoiced at the sight of "the British oak, also many familiar flowers such as the everlasting pea, Sweet William, and forget-me-not." He was particularly impressed by "the Tri-tonia, a native of Africa, and known as the ‘red-hot poker’," which appears to have been a complete novelty to him.

Next comes a high-flown description of night "creeping slowly o’er the hillside," which can be taken as read. At half-past seven Smith and Park left "Farmborough" to walk to Unanderra, accompanied by some of their friends as far as "a spot along the road (where) a drain has been cut which endangers vehicular traffic and has received the name of ‘cussed place’." They had to "put on all speed" but reached Unanderra in time, "selected a carriage where there were two corners vacant, laid our legs up on the seat [first, one hopes, removing their boots], and dozed and woke in turns till we reached Sydney about half-past eleven p.m." (which seems to have been a slow trip—at least three hours, slow even for the Illawarra line).

"Where our paths lay in opposite directions we shook hands and parted, and I read in George’s face, as I think he must have done in mine, the gratification with which he looked back upon the success of our outing."

Here Smith’s narrative ends, but there may be a postscript. His opus is prefaced by a dedication, in terms which can only be called fulsome, to Miss Blackman; but someone has pasted in, at the top of the first page, a newspaper cutting:

"Park-Blackman: September 18, at the residence of the bride’s father, by the Rev. Richard Miller, B.A., George Alexander Park to Eva Blackman." So George at least had reason for his look of gratification—one wonders about Martin Smith.

(Concluded)

(Does anyone know where McCloy’s Creek was? The parish map shows a grant to Joseph Barrett [Portion 39, Parish of Kembla] bounded on the south by Payne’s Road, West Dapto, and about two miles from Farmborough in a westerly direction. If this was Barrett’s farm, I would hazard a guess that McCloy’s Creek was that shown on the parish map as
"West Dapto Creek" descending from the area west of the Moss Vale railway marked "Kembla State Forest," and crossed by Sheaffe's Road near "Stream Hill." Can anyone confirm or deny? and does anyone know whether the falls described by Martin Smith are still accessible, and if so by what route?—Ed.).

(The editor thanks Misses W. and A. Musgrave, the owners of the original diary, for permission to use it as the basis for these articles and to quote extracts).