AN OCTOGENARIAN REMEMBERS:

(The Editor thanks Mr. Edgar Beale and his sisters for permission to print the text of the reminiscences of their mother, the late Mrs. Jean Robertson, read to the Society on 7th November 1968 by Mrs. Barbara King).

Perhaps before I tell of myself and my early recollections, I should give some background of the people who brought me into the world, and their associates in Wollongong. My maternal great-grandfather was Charles Throsby Smith, (an Englishman born at Leicester in 1798), and my paternal great-grandfather was Dr. John Osborne R.N. They were both early settlers, the Smiths living on Smith's Hill, and the Osbornes on Garden Hill. I used to hear it said that the families kept trees lopped so as to maintain a clear view between the two houses in case of attack by Aborigines, the signal being to wave a sheet in the event of any danger. I am not aware of there ever being any trouble—on the contrary, relations with the blacks seem to have been always good—but it was a wise precaution for those early days. And the two hills serve me well as a means of explaining the two families.

The Smiths were on Smith's Hill first, so I will deal with them first. My great-grandfather's grant of land was bounded roughly by the sea coast on the east, Crown Street on the south, the railway line on the west, and Stuart Park on the north. His home was on the crest of his Hill, on the south western slope, and was called Bustle Farm, though the early settlers used to aggrandize the name into Bustle Hall. The name arose from the fact that it was a busy, bustling place, and the family usually called it simply "Bustle." I believe there were three "Bustles" in all. The first was probably only a slab hut, and was replaced by another house which was burned down. I recall hearing how the family silver was destroyed, the molten remains being recovered in the ashes. Then the third "Bustle" was built. This was the spacious colonial-style stone-built cottage which I remember, though my recollection only goes back to the time when it was owned and occupied by Mr. Franklin, who modernised it beyond recognition. It has since been demolished.

There Charles Throsby Smith brought up his family. He was married three times, and I sprang from the first marriage, his wife being a daughter of William Broughton, the Deputy Commissary-General, who arrived in the flagship "Sirius" in the First Fleet. My grandmother was one of a family of two sons and five daughters. Eliza Clarissa, the eldest, married an English cousin, Frederick Reynolds Cole, who built Wye Lodge in Smith Street. Maria came next, of whom more anon. Emma married Ben Marshall, a brother of Mrs. Henry Osborne of Marshall Mount. Then came Sarah, who married Matthew Thomas Pratt. Two sons followed, Charles Frederick and Philip Life Smith. The youngest child of that marriage, Elizabeth Martha, remained single. There were other children of the second marriage.

The second daughter, Maria, born at Appin in 1828, was my maternal grandmother. The girls, I am sure, were all thoroughly well-
brought-up and ladylike young misses, but I remember hearing that they were by way of being tomboys, too, at least to the extent of riding horses bareback over their father’s paddocks, wearing cabbage-tree hats—which must have made a few Victorian eyebrows rise in wonder. My grandmother, Maria, was a gentle, sweet, pretty-faced woman of slight but tall build, and of great serenity. She spoke with an English accent because as a young girl she was taken to England to complete her education at a school in Ponders End, just out of London. All her life she kept some farewell messages from her schoolgirl friends, amongst whom she was apparently very popular. She was loved by everybody and so it was no wonder that when a young Government official came to Illawarra in the early fifties, as Clerk of Petty Sessions, he fell in love with her, and they married. The ‘groom was my grandfather, Alfred Allatson Turner, later Police Magistrate in Wollongong and district. He was a kind man, a byword for rectitude, but with a good sense of humour. He was known to fine an old hand five shillings or so for over-indulgence on a bit of a spree, but if he was a decent chap and could not pay, grandfather would pay the fine for him. He was an adventurous man who went as a voluntary explorer with Kennedy in 1847.

They had four children: Edward, Emma (my mother), Charles, and Emily. Emma married John Douglass Osborne, a member of the family on the other hill. But before I leave Smith’s Hill, I may add some stories I heard of the life of the Smith family in the early days.

Not only were the Aborigines friendly with my forebears, but they paid them great compliments by often calling their baby girls by the Christian names of the Smith “young ladies”—Clara, Emma, Maria, Sarah, and so on. The gins would occasionally see the “young ladies” combing their hair, and, not to be outdone, would do likewise, using as combs the backbones of large fish.

In those early days the Sunday Church Service was held in the Bustle Farm barn, and the small daughters of the house were given packets of tobacco which they gave to the assigned convict servants who were compelled to attend services.

One of my grandmother’s early recollections was the story of the lost postman. Even though Wollongong was a growing settlement during her girlhood, it was an isolated place. Most communications were by sea, but the post used to come overland, by the old road from Appin as I imagine, down the mountain over Bulli Pass, and then along the beach. Mail day was something to which to look forward keenly, and from Bustle they could see the postman ride along the beach. He would always announce his approach on the far side of Fairy Creek by blowing a horn, which no doubt was the signal for great excitement. One day the horn was blown. the postman was seen in the distance—and that was all! Neither postman nor horse was ever seen again. There were various conjectures, the most likely being that both were sunk in quicksands. As a matter of fact, when I was a child one could sink to the knees in quicksands on the edge of Fairy Creek.

(To be continued)
AN OCTOGENARIAN REMEMBERS:  
(Reminiscences of the late Mrs. Jean Robertson, continued from December 1977 Bulletin)

So much for the Smith’s Hill family; now I must introduce the Osbornes, of Garden Hill, where Wollongong Hospital now stands. This was a property of 640 acres, a mile square, extending well over to Mangerton and almost to Mount Drummond. My great-grandfather, born at Dernaseer, Ireland, in 1791, was Dr. John Osborne, R.N., a naval surgeon, who received the Crown Grant for the property (then known as Glen Glosh), but was not the original settler, because he bought the property in the 1830s. He died in 1850. He had two brothers, Dr. Alick (also a naval surgeon) and Henry, who as the youngest was brought out to the colony by his two brothers, settled at Marshall Mount and from there moved out west, acquiring large pastoral properties, and dying an extremely wealthy man.

Dr. John and Sarah his wife, had several sons and daughters. One of the sons, Alick, married the daughter of the Rev. Matthew Devenish Meares, the first Rector of St. Michael’s, Wollongong. The eldest member of the family was my maternal grandfather, Archibald Osborne, who had a property bequeathed to him by his father at Brisbane Water. He married Eliza Douglass, a daughter of Dr. Henry Grattan Douglass, of Douglass Park, who had a stormy career over a long life in public affairs. He was somewhat of a philanthropist, and is credited with the idea of founding Sydney University. It was he who had the idea, and on the advice of Dr. Merewether passed it on to William Charles Wentworth, whose drive and authority brought the idea to reality. Dr. Douglass’s coat of arms is carved on the wall of the Great Hall at the University.

Archibald and Eliza had a son, John Douglass Osborne, who was my father, and who married Emma Turner. So descendants of early settlers on the two hills united in marriage, and I was one of the offspring.

I have now finished for the time being with begats, and, having brought myself into the world, so to speak, can reminisce at will. The only connecting link between my thoughts will be that they will all relate to the period from my early childhood (I was born in 1884), until the early 1900s, when my family moved to Sydney. I kept up my association with Wollongong in some degree, and moved back here to live in the early 1920s, but since I cannot pretend to any unique recollections since then, I will speak only of my childhood and young womanhood.

My earliest recollection?—I am not quite sure, but I think it must be attending church at St. Michael’s Church of England with my grandparents and their dog, Beppo. They were regular churchgoers, and so was Beppo, a plump liver-and-white King Charles spaniel who settled quietly under the pews and offered no distractions whatever to the devout. I must have been very young, because I was under the impression that the principal function of the Rector, the Reverend Thomas Campbell Ewing, was to give demonstrations of reading the Bible with his eyes shut. I remember in the congregation Mrs. Ewing and the Rectory family, who were close friends of ours. The Jenkins family of Berkeley would be there, having arrived in state in carriage and pair with liveried groom—and likewise the
MacCabes of Russell Vale. Then there were the Owens from Bellambi, who came in a basket-like brougham driven by their groom William. They always left their conveyance at my grandfather's house near the church. There William spent the morning in earnest conversation with John Hourigan, the gardener-cum-groom of my Grandfather Turner. One question resolved between them was that the world was not round, but square—for didn't the Bible say "in the four corners of the earth"?

The Turner home was a roomy cottage situated in Church Street where the Boys' Primary School now stands. The frontage was of stone with shutters and wide verandahs. The "old" part of the house originally faced Smith Street. That land, given to his daughter by Great-Grandfather Smith, was resumed by the Education Department for the Public School, and many years later the rest of the property was resumed for the boys' school. The old house was called Yonga—there were no street numbers then. At the time I speak of, it had a rambling garden which for the most part looked after itself, but was a fine place to play in. Well I remember my young cousin Jim helping me make a cubby house using for posts branches lopped from the coral trees, and how proud we were of ourselves when the posts sprouted and began to grow.

The laundry—my grandmother, with her English education, would call it the laundry—and the fuel shed were several yards from the house. The kitchen, joined to the house by a covered way, was large, with sturdy rafters instead of a ceiling. Behind the door was a special place for my cousin's large bag of marbles, awaiting that mystic day when, suddenly, tops, or whatever was the thing, would be out, and marbles would be the thing. I clearly recall my young cousin one day as he raced home, pushed open the front gate, ran down the hall and out to the kitchen for his bag of marbles, yelling as he ran, "Marbles is in! Marbles is in." Life was uneventful then.

Adjoining the kitchen was a room divided by a low wall. This was the abode of our two maids, both Lizzies, who did an honest day's work for the large wage of ten shillings a week each. They were happy, trustworthy, and loyal. It was an age when servants were servants, but between my grandparents and their employees—and they were no exception—there was mutual respect and kind feeling. In nearly every case the maids married from Yonga, with trousseau and a nice cheque from my grandparents happily given. Before my time girls came out from Ireland to do domestic work. and my grandmother gave them time off to attend their Church. One Roman Catholic priest remarked that this was more than many a Catholic lady in Dublin would have done.

Even after marriage, the friendship between maids and mistress was kept up. Until only a few years ago I used to keep in touch with the daughters of one of our maids, Ellen, and only lost close touch when they left the district. I loved their mother, who would put up with me—fortunately, I was only slight—taking a hop, step and a jump on to her broad back while she unconcernedly went on scrubbing the floor.

One maid I remember, named Cassie, was an ardent Salvationist. I was once left in her charge during the family's absence in Sydney, and I can well remember my joy when one proud evening I
marched down Crown Street with the Army and was made much of during the meeting outside the Commercial Hotel. I must have been about six at the time.

(To be continued)
AN OCTOGENARIAN REMEMBERS:
(Reminiscences of the late Mrs. Jean Robertson, continued from March Bulletin)

Before I went away to boarding school in Sydney, my cousin and I had a governess, so I cannot speak with close knowledge of school days, though at one time when we had no governess I went to St. Mary's Convent for a term. My education started at the old Sunday School which consisted of a hall with residence attached, and was situated on the southern side of Market Street between Kembla and Corrimal Streets. Here Mrs. Eastman, a widow, and her two daughters conducted a Church school. I well remember the laborious copy-book exercises, and Little Arthur's History of England, and a metal-bound spelling book. Sewing and handicrafts we were taught, and for lighter moments, dancing—lancers, the waltz, the polka, the mazurka, and, best of all, the maypole dance. Holding ribbons of many colours suspended from a pole, we would dance around the pole with gay abandon.

Illawarra College was a school for older boys and girls. The venue of this seat of learning was a two-storey weatherboard house in Market Square which still stands. The principal was a Mr. Dalrymple, a scholarly man with no idea of discipline, and I am afraid he did not have a happy time. The boys took advantage of his weakness, and many were the tales of their lawlessness. Among the pupils were my brother and sister, the Owens, some of the Osborne family from Mangerton, Harry (afterwards Doctor) Lee, his brother Frank Lee, the Woodwards (children of the solicitor Francis Woodward) and many others. I had heard of an earlier school, whose headmaster was a Mr. Foster. He died, leaving Dr. Timothy Lee (Dr. Harry's father) as guardian of his three children.

Dr. Timothy Lee came from England with his wife, sister-in-law, and other relatives, and set up in practice in Market Square in a cottage on the northern side which has not long been demolished. Later he built a home and surgery in Smith Street where two of his daughters still reside.

Living adjacent to Yonga was Dr. Thomson whose house was where the boys' school playground now is in Market Street, opposite the Court House. It was a pretty old place, called Alma Cottage with dormer windows, iron lace edging the verandahs, and a large holly bush on each side of the front steps. Dr. Wade lived there later, and after that the late Ernest Owen. In a lane on the west of Alma Cottage was another cottage, which was also near our stables. There Dr. Thomson's groom, Mick Considine, and his wife lived. They were great friends of mine, and Mrs. Considine used to give me slices of her delicious oatcake.

Wollongong Harbour was of course busy in those days. I do not remember the pre-railway days, but I can remember when the ships took passengers up and down the coast. There was a tug in the harbour which was hired every Wednesday afternoon by some of the keen fishermen of the township—amongst others were my Grandfather Turner, Mr. Walter Graham Robertson (Manager of the Commercial Banking Co. of Sydney Ltd.), Colonel Owen, and David Ross Jamieson (who was Clerk of Petty Sessions when my Grandfather was in office, and who married my Aunt Emily Turner), Schnapper
and other fish were in abundance—or so it seems to me now. My affectionate Grandfather would put aside from the catch a bright red nanegai for me.

Flagstaff Hill was a popular resort because of the "Chain" baths and the "Ladies" baths opposite the Fort. Then there was the one-o'clock gun which never failed to give us the correct time, and the black ball which was hoisted on the flagstaff to warn ships when heavy seas made entry to the harbour dangerous. I think at that time there were some permanent artillery men living in the fort, and every year there was some sort of important military event when army dignitaries came from Sydney. There was a "sham fight" and at night a banquet and great doings. Guns were fired on the fort, and many were the complaints when plaster walls cracked in nearby houses.

Opposite Brighton Beach, near the harbour, was the Brighton Hotel, kept by a Mr. Galvin. It was unusual in that the bar trade was its last objective. The accommodation was so homely and comfortable that many people—many of them notable—patronised it. Visitors would book in all the year round, and children would be sent there with their nurses. Amongst others were the children of the Sydney manufacturer Octavius Beale, one of whose sons I later married. Often my husband and I wondered if by chance we had ever played together as children on Brighton Beach.

Outings were simple then, but thoroughly enjoyable. My uncle Jamieson and his friends would spend holidays camping at Lake Illawarra. It was a beautiful, unspoiled place in those days, and I would be driven in a double-seater buggy with my elders to join the men in a lovely long day’s picnic. At other times, one of my chief joys was when my cousin and I would ride our ponies along the North Beach to the Black Rocks at Towradgi. This was a great adventure as in those days Towradgi and the Black Rocks seemed a far cry from Wollongong.

On the crest of Smith’s Hill, in the paddock opposite Bustle Farm, was an enormous gum tree. I can remember it only as stark and bare, but for some reason it meant a lot to us. A Rector of St. Michael’s, later Bishop Gerard Addington d’Arcy-Irvin, though a lovable man, was not so estimable as a poet; he celebrated this tree to the limit of his art in a poem called "The Patriarchal Tree." It must have been a magnificent specimen in its heyday—perhaps that is why Charles Throsby Smith left it as his landmark. Its base was damaged by fire, and one day it fell in a storm. Something was missing in the landscape.

I will try to draw a picture of my memory of lovely Stuart Park. There are people still living who will recall it as it was, then and later—its natural beauty, the Lovers' Walk where the sandy path was lined with native trees which met overhead, the old brush fence on the other side of which was the ocean beach. Fairy creek was clear enough to see the sandy bottom. You could see the reflections of the opposite banks and trees, the view of Mount Keira before mechanised mines marred it with dreary patches. How many, I wonder, have nostalgic memories of tea on the ferny banks of Fairy Creek? Later, as you know, the Park and Creek were in the doldrums. Tents, caravans, cars, trucks, and other rolling stock with sunburnt occupants littered the bush. Lovers' Walk was dealt with by vandals, and
the Creek became a dumping ground for tin cans, broken bottles and nondescript rubbish. The Council coffers benefited, but the people of Wollongong lost their Park. Now the scene is changed once more. The city council and the Apex Club have done some severe cleaning up, and neatness again prevails, but Stuart Park has lost its soul!

(To be continued)
Sundays in my girlhood were rather dreary. My Grandmother was a devoutly and sincerely religious person who led a really good life. She used to teach me—as was the usual thing—that one should not play on Sundays, or even sew, and if one read, it should be such “improving” books as “Pilgrim’s Progress.” I could never stand the book, and I am afraid that by her standards I was a sinner on Sundays. She was president of the Benevolent Society, and my aunt was secretary. In those days there were really poor people living in wretched, smelly cottages. My cousin and I would be sent to deliver to these poor souls an order for their monthly grocery dole. My Grandmother also had the Dorcas Bag, which contained clothes and all necessities for the unfortunate babies born to the still more unfortunate parents. The bag was returnable after use, and the baby’s clothes, bedding, and so forth, newly laundered, would be kept for the next confinement.

Those were grim days for the very poor. I have never forgotten calling with a Benevolent Society order at the house of an Irish woman who took me inside to see her husband who was dying of cancer. He had a sort of half-hooped cage to keep the blankets from touching him, and she even lifted the blankets to show me part of his wasting body. The point is that this poor woman had not only to
nurse a dying man in abject poverty, but look after a state ward too. The small sum of money she would be paid for looking after the child was no doubt needed to help support the household. We can be thankful that such an environment would never be tolerated now for an orphan child.

But it is time to go visiting some of the local gentry. A close friendship existed between the Turner and the Rectory family, the Ewings. The eldest Ewing daughter, Agnes, became the wife of Robert Jenkins of Berkeley, the eldest son of William Warren Jenkins of whom I will speak later. Another daughter, Marian, married Henry Osborne MacCabe of Russell Vale, who died rescuing trapped miners in the Mount Kembla disaster. Amy married Robert Allen, a Sydney solicitor. Of the sons Thompson (afterwards knighted as Sir Thomas Ewing) entered parliament and was postmaster-general during his political career; he married Margaret MacCabe, daughter of Francis Peter MacCabe of Russell Vale and of his wife Jane, who was a daughter of Henry Osborne of Marshall Mount. Norman served his articles with Francis Woodward and afterwards became Chief Justice of Tasmania. All these marriages took place before my time, but the friendship with the Ewings and my family lasted for three generations.

In those days it was the custom for husband and wife to pay formal calls together. Cards were given to the servant who opened the door, or were placed discreetly on a salver in the hall. I loved our visits to the huge stone, two-storied house of the MacCabes at Russell Vale because I could play in the spacious grounds outside and fish in the creek—though I am sure there was never as much as a single fish in that creek. At these places there was always something to interest children as well as adults. Once during a visit to the Owens at Bellambi I put my finger in a pet monkey’s cage and received a sharp nip. My yells brought all the guests from the drawing room and I was consoled only when one of the Owen sons, later Colonel Percy, produced some pliers and pretended to extract the embedded tooth that bit me. Anyhow, I felt much better.

My cousin and I were always happy to go visiting my great-aunt Hannah and great-uncle William Osborne at Gladstone (part of Dr. John Osborne’s grant) when the figs were ripe. I remember their large drawing room had many mirrors, and we would amuse ourselves by grimacing to each other’s reflections while the grown-ups engaged in more serious activities. In the south transept at St. Michael’s there is a tablet to the memory of Uncle William, and a window perpetuates the memory of his son, Fred Osborne, who remembered St. Michael’s very handsomely in his will.

My visits to Berkeley to play with Grace Jenkins were a joy, except when I stayed overnight and became homesick. Berkeley in those days (since demolished, but situated south of the electricity sub-station in Five Islands Road, Unanderra) was the mansion of the district, but I realise now that the days of its glory were on the wane.

The grant was made originally to Jemima Jenkins, wife of Robert Jenkins, and it was their son William Warren Jenkins who had built the establishment into a place of much grandeur. Their private race-course was the scene of revelling, the tenant farmers touched their
caps to the family, and feudalism reigned supreme. William Warren Jenkins was an autocrat of the first water, but a good citizen withal. He gave the land for the fishing village at Lake Illawarra, and generations of Masseys, Fishlocks, Dennisses, and Barbers have lived and loved and fished there.

Miss Jemima Warren Jenkins, the eldest daughter, ran the Sunday School, visited the sick, and did all that a squire's daughter should do. I went to see her in later years at her home at Rose Bay shortly before her death and her one-hundredth birthday. She was of course buried at Berkeley cemetery, the sleeping place of all the deceased Jenkinses. But at the time I speak of, William Warren Jenkins and his wife were dead, and their son Robert and his wife Agnes (formerly Ewings) reigned in their stead.

As I remember it, the house was enormous. It had two storeys, with wide verandahs on three sides of each floor. The hall had large black-and-white chess-board tiles on the floor, and the main living rooms had quite magnificent Italian carved mantels around the fireplaces. On the right after entering the front door was the library, lined floor to ceiling with leather-bound books, though I cannot be sure they were much read in my day there.

Not infrequently I would go visiting with our close friend, Mrs. Wattie (Walter Graham) Robertson, who was a daughter of Robert Jenkins. Some people today may even remember an old two-seater buggy in which old Mr. and Mrs. Robertson used to drive around the town. Just as today young people in love sit close together in cars and longer-married couples sit further apart, so people in those days could sit very distantly apart, and Mr. and Mrs. Wattie Robertson would sit so far apart and so solidly in their respective corners that my impish young cousin used to call them the bookends.

One house I used to visit with Mrs. Robertson was Springfield, the home of Mr. and Mrs. Deighton (pronounced Dye-ton) Taylor. She was Rachel Henning, whose letters were published a few years ago. They were close friends of the Jenkins family whom she mentions in her letters. I remember her as a rather austere but very dignified, even snobbish, old lady who served tea with thick cream instead of milk. All I can remember of Deighton Taylor was his big beard and an embroidered smoking cap, complete with tassel.

I have an idea that the Taylors were not well off, though this could be a childish impression created by the fact that their floors were not carpeted. Certainly, however, it was a beautifully appointed house in many respects, and Mrs. Taylor's china and silver—family pieces, I have no doubt—were of the very best. Their garden was lovely—wide paths winding amid trees, shrubs and flowers. The banks of American Creek, near which the house was built, were cool and ferny and shaded by sassafras trees. At other times the Taylors would call at Yonga, and partake of cake or biscuits and wine—horrible combination—and Deighton Taylor would play whist with my grandfather.

More of my own age, and my more constant playfellows, were the Elders, children of the Rector, the Rev. Frank Elder. We had lots of fun together, except that one of the boys was a bit of a prig. The other children all had a healthy sense of fun and mischief, but if
Eric—he was straight out of "Eric, or Little by Little"—saw us playing on a Sunday, he would recite to us the couplet:

This is Sunday, holy day,
Little children should not play!

All he would get from us was a push to jolt him out of his self-conscious sanctity, and go on with the game. Every one of the boys, however great his enjoyment of a prank when young, followed their father into the Church, but not Eric. We must have done rather too good a job in jolting him.

(To be continued)
AN OCTOGENARIAN REMEMBERS:

Reminiscences of the late Mrs. Jean Robertson, continued from May Bulletin).

Life was simple then, and, with no organized entertainment, the young had to make their own. It was all quite harmless, though I can remember an occasion when one Jack Woods, a half-caste Aboriginal, did his usual performance of stretching a rope across Belmore Basin, and playing Blondin as he walked his rope. Some local lads cut two or three of the stays, causing the main rope to swing so widely that Jack Woods fell into the harbour. Simpler entertainments still were church tea-meetings, where everyone would go. At the Presbyterian Church they would launch promptly into singing grace—"Praise God from whom all blessings flow..."—and then without more ado out would come large tea-pots, cups and saucers and lashings of cakes. My cousin had struck up a friendship with a barnacled old sea-dog, the captain of one of our regular coastal vessels, the Ruakoka, and proudly bore him off to a tea-meeting where the rough old buccaneer had to put up with tea and cakes instead of what I am sure was his usual fare—a bottle of rum, or something.

Occasionally we performed what are known as Good Works. Once May Elder and I were so fired with zeal that we ran a stall at the St. Michael's Church fete. We sold toys and children's things, our stall being prettily decorated with Chinese lanterns holding candles. In those days fêtes would go on over three days. The first night our enthusiasm carried us through, but the second night enthusiasm flagged a little. We asked old Colonel Owen—a dignified old gentleman, if ever there was one—to look after our stall while we went for refreshments, and had a good time. But we left him there so long that he got sick of it too, and he had to send for us to come back to resume duty. The third night, probably through inattention, the Chinese lanterns set fire to the stall, which went up in flames. I cannot remember that we did much to save our stall, or that we were ever asked to run another one. But there was great excitement while the fire lasted.

Another time the Elders and I thought up a mild diversion to relieve the comparative monotony of Sunday School. It was a simple plan—we merely suggested that the pupils should attend in force, bringing their dogs with them. They certainly did! Some girls of my age were the daughters of a local butcher, and they brought their whole pack of sheep-dogs. The Sunday-school grounds (then still in Market Street near the Congregational Church) were over-run with a gaggle of dogs of every shape and size and breed, and I have to confess that my own dog, a notorious fighter called Zulu, was one of the main trouble-makers. I was not actually expelled for my part in this enterprise, but my grand-mother did see fit from then on to have religious teaching administered to me at home.

Zulu was a fox terrier with a bit of bull terrier in him, and had none of the usual black spots of fox terriers on him at all, being pure white—though his white purity was marred somewhat by healthy scars gained in many a tough fight. However, he started life white enough to suggest the name of Zulu. He was famous not only as a fighter, but as a ratter too. Once he was borrowed by old Mr. John
Bright—of Bright’s Arcade fame—to clear a plague of rats in his store. Zulu performed as only he could, and came home coughing and sneezing, and covered in kapok and some other brown stuff used for mattresses, but obviously having enjoyed himself. I was very proud of his score, though I think the score tended to mount over the years, so I will not hazard mentioning a tally now.

To get back to the more serious side of things, in those days we had two mail deliveries per day, the postman being mounted on horseback. Bert Mekin I remember well as a young man—it is only a few years since he died—and I remember Billy Parkinson, too, full of good-humoured wise-cracks. A popular meeting-place for young people then was when the post-office used to open at 8 p.m. for an hour so that mail could be distributed over the counter. There were no strikes then!

There was a strike, though, by Bulli miners. I do not know the cause of it, but feeling ran high, especially when “black-legs” were brought in to work the mine. The situation was quite ugly, and Grandfather Turner, as magistrate, was instructed to go to the troubled area and, if necessary, read the Riot Act. But he did not need to. He spoke to the rioters in a friendly manner, appealing to their good sense, and managed to quieten them. I think that the respect in which he was held played a large part in quelling the trouble.

Some years after this came the Mt Kembla disaster. I well remember the gloom cast upon the district. These were the days when gloom was manifested by black draperies, and other trappings of woe. Shops were closed, and draped in black while pathetic funerals passed by, the poor bodies in hurriedly-made deal coffins covered in black cloth. It was a tragic time for the relatives, and a sad time for all. I remember the long funeral of Henry Osborne MacCabe, who died a hero’s death in saving the lives of so many. His funeral was an impressive one with the full military honours due to one so brave and to his rank of Major in the Volunteers.

The first Wollongong Hospital, the Albert Memorial, was staffed by a married couple, Mr. and Mrs. Stenhouse. They were neither of them trained, but they seemed to deal with the district maladies in a more or less efficient manner. The wards—or perhaps there was only one?—were kept scrupulously clean by the standards of the day. The old building in Flinders Street, despite a recent blue face-lift, is now on its last legs. Later the hospital board purchased the present site—my great-grandfather’s home on Garden Hill—where for years the old homestead was used as nurses’ quarters. It has been long demolished, and the only part of the old establishment remaining is a few of the trees.

If Wollongong ever had occasion to celebrate, it did so in no stinted manner. I did not know Bill Beach, apart from having met him once in his very old age, but when news came that this local blacksmith from Dapto had won the world championship in sculling, the town showed its delight in brave displays of flags and decorations. Later I saw a waxworks display in Sydney, and among the notables represented there was Bill Beach. I confess that I told the people in charge that he was my uncle, and was very pleased when they seemed to believe me.
There were other occasions when I was thrust forward against my will, but with more genuine purpose. Dear old Mr. D'Arcy-Irvine, one of our later Rectors, always used to call on me as a girl to present flowers to the lady who opened the Church fete. He would single me out as the great-granddaughter of Charles Throsby Smith, who had given the Church its beautiful site. Whatever they say now, in those days—within living memory of the event—people always said that Charles Throsby Smith had made a gift of the Church lands. (To be continued)
AN OCTOGENARIAN REMEMBERS:
(Reminiscences of the late Mrs. Jean Robertson, continued from June Bulletin).

Living was cheap. Many is the time I came home to Yonga to find black gins waiting there with fish and lobsters for us. The first we might know was when we would see green lobsters alive scrambling around on the verandahs or covered way leading to the kitchen. Not far away we would see the old gins squatting, sitting on nothing as it were, and I well recall the smell of them. It was not unpleasant—on the contrary, I liked it. I suppose really it was just the smell of campfires, though I suspect other members of the family had other views. Anyhow, business would be done, and beautiful big fish and lobsters would be traded in return for money or clothes and always a good feed for the gins thrown in.

Rents, too, were cheap. Paddocks of an acre or more, fronting Smith Street, would be let to Chinese market gardeners for two shillings a week. One of Grandmother’s tenants was Harry Hong, who had a fine garden in eastern Smith Street, opposite “Valetta” where the old Misses Gordon lived. Once, after my grandmother, then a widow, had left the district, my cousin Jim and I came back for a holiday at Yonga, where we fended for ourselves. Knowing that Harry Hong was behind in his rent and cashing in on the fact, we went to him. “Harry, you owe ’um rent,” we said, and proceeded to tell him he would have to supply us with vegetables. This he said he would do, though he would probably have done so anyhow, because the Chinese were wonderfully kind and generous to us. He told us we could have whatever we wanted, and much pleasure we had in going down to get supplies. The old Misses Gordon would be sitting on their verandah with other old ladies—Miss Ettie Marr and Miss Mary Read the schoolteacher, for example—and we would take delight in emerging from Harry’s garden laden with a water-melon each, or some such goody, no doubt leaving the old ladies shocked to see the late magistrate’s grandchildren apparently stealing from a Chinaman’s garden.

The produce of the gardeners was as prolific as it was varied. To prove this I have only to tell you of the time when my cousin, having eaten well if not wisely, threw up. As he surveyed his indelicate outpouring, he remarked ruefully “Apricots and all!”

We really enjoyed the friendship of the Chinese who produced these good things. One of them, Sam Lee, lived at Fairy Meadow. After a trip to Sydney he returned to our district with a wife, who was white. He asked us to go out and see her, which we did in accepted style, but our “call” was not an unqualified success because the bride took fright, went bush, and left us to be entertained by Sam. However, Sam did us proud, showed us their huge white satin-covered bed, and regaled us with lemonade served in coloured wine-glasses.

Then there was Say Ying, better known as Georgie, the best fun of all. He lived with an albino woman, called the white rat. For that matter he was no oil painting himself, being little, bent and ugly. My grandmother would lecture him on the irregularity of his life and the apparent looseness of his morals. As a matter of fact, I used to read him a lecture on the same subject myself occasionally, to draw
him out. But Georgie would only laugh, whoever lectured him. If he was weak in morality, he was strong in democracy, because in days when servants addressed even the young as Miss This or Master That, George was on simple Christian names with us all. (My brother Archibald had something of an air about him, as perhaps became the eldest son of the eldest son of the Osborne clan. When he saw Georgie he would greet him in clipped speech with a slightly lordly “Well Georgie?” , but would get nothing back from Georgie but a squeaky “Hullo Archie!” ) My grandmother tried her best to make a good Christian of Georgie, and explained that if he mended his ways he would go to a wonderful place up there called heaven, but if not he would go to a terrible place down there called hell. She got nowhere. Georgie was too matter-of-fact to fall for that sort of illogic. He had his feet too firmly on the ground and would simply laugh, asking my grandmother “How you get up litty (this-ee) way?” —pointing upwards—“You wag ’um wings?”

Once I asked Georgie what he would like for Christmas. Would he like me to make him a cake? He said no—“Cake too gly. Me like ’um poogin.” So I promised to make him a pudding, but something went astray, and I finished up buying him a tinned one which I turned out on a plate and presented to him. However, you could not catch Georgie as easily as that. Wagging his finger at me, he turned the tables and laughingly lectured me: “Jinny, you no make that poogin! You tell ’um lie, you bad girl, Jinny! You go down litty way!”—pointing down to the bowels of the earth.

(To be continued)
AN OCTOGENARIAN REMEMBERS:
(Reminiscences of the late Mrs. Jean Robertson, continued from July Bulletin)

I have tried to give a picture of social and every-day life, covering as many walks of life as possible. Classes were strongly divided, but with good feeling in general between them. If I have dwelt rather upon Chinese market gardeners, for instance, and other "characters," I am not to be taken as implying that the usual social structure did not exist. Oddities and "characters" have a stronger mark in the mind than people living in humdrum respectability, however excellent. I hope it can be seen that Wollongong had its rich and its poor, its landed gentry and working classes, its professional men and business men and tradesmen just the same as existed in other communities. Then there were the newly-rich as we have today. On the other hand, there was another type, the people of some class, perhaps one might even describe them as upper class, the newly poor. These people of good family but often great poverty were accepted and known in the best homes, and considerably helped by them, whereas the newly rich might be highly respected without being accepted. In spite of the distinctions, I really believe people were happy and contented. Please do not think I am saying that the gentry were any better than miners or small farmers. On the contrary, we had good friends in all stations in life. Helped by the smallness of the community, there was mutual respect between classes and no resentment—and that is the big difference between then and now. Everywhere standards of conduct were high. Of course, there was the same element of crime and wrong-doing, yet even then there was a difference. For instance, I remember that we had a maid once who got into trouble, and was so distressed at her pregnancy that she committed suicide. My grandmother and aunt had the horrible experience of having to go to Court to give evidence. As for the man responsible, it is reported that some of his workmates tarred and feathered him, and drove him out of town.

However, there is one class of people I have not referred to. In the light of later developments in the district, they were an important class, originating in the secondary industries which were just beginning to develop at the end of the time I speak of. The Dapto Smelting Works were in full operation then. I had just left school and met some of the young men on the staff. They were gentlemen and good company, and in due course we used to arrange picnics. Gooseberry Island, the larger of the two small green islands in Lake Illawarra, was the chosen spot. It was a lovely place, named because of the Cape Gooseberry which grew plentifully there. Originally it was
covered with thick natural brush, much of which still remained in my lay. Yet it had a jetty, and an open grassy area with trees and a small pavilion for shelter. The guests from Wollongong drove to Kanahooka Point and thence went by boat to the island, rowed by a fisherman. The Smelting Works boys arrived in their sailing boat, and a good time was had by all. We danced in the pavilion to the music of a concertina played by our friend the fisherman. After several of these happy occasions the guests from the Smelting Works, wishing to return the hospitality of the Wollongong folk, told us of a turkey they had at the bachelors’ quarters, and which they would be glad to get rid of. Might they kill it, have it cooked, and bring it along to our next picnic? This was arranged. But, of course, the turkey was a myth, and we later heard the rest of the story of how the boys set about turning the myth into a reality. To their dismay, not a turkey was to be had in the district. They scoured the farms of the district per buggy and on horseback, still with no success. Imagine the panic! Finally they ran one to earth at Braidwood and so were able to bring triumphantly to the island, beautifully dressed and roasted by their housekeeper. We thoroughly enjoyed the joke as well as the turkey.

A few years ago—1960 perhaps—my yearning for a sight of Gooseberry Island again was realised. My son took me there, but what did I see?—a jungle of lantana and other undesirable growth, with an undergrowth of stinging nettles. The ground was littered with the usual unwanted legacies of picnickers—and I never want to go back there again.

Never go back! That perhaps is the slogan for the preservation of nostalgic yearning. The slogan applies to places, anyhow. Yet going back in time is another matter, and pleasant one. Not that I am prepared to say the old days were better than these. We have gained much, but we have lost much, and I think the greatest loss has been serenity of mind and simple contentment. One must have progress, though I have heard at least one of my contemporaries exclaim roundly “Progress be damned!” He wanted his beloved old Wollongong and Illawarra back. But of course we cannot have it. Whether we like it or not, the old world we knew has gone forever. The most we can hope is that, in place of the natural loveliness we knew, we will build other forms of beauty, artificial perhaps, but beautiful just the same. If industry must take over, let it leave room for natural beauty. Recently I saw with pleasure the progress being made with our new botanical gardens in Wollongong, and I thought then that something was being put back after all. That is the sort of thing we want, but much more of it. I am sure that nothing could please our forebears more than to know that later generations are at last trying to make good the damage that so-called progress has done. That, at any rate, is my fervent wish, and with that I leave you.

(Concluded)

NEW MEMBERS:

Welcome to Mr. and Mrs. Leing and Mrs. M. Harrison.