CAPTAIN COLE OF “NONSUCH”—The Early History of Farmborough:

The farm land which is now “Farmborough Farm,” situated in Farmborough Road on the slopes of Mount Kembla, N.S.W., is part of land first taken up from 1843 by Robert Martin Cole (1788-1869).

The present “Farmborough Farm,” of some 75 acres, is located on the first parcels of land granted free to Cole in 1843 and 1845. It is the residue of 424 adjoining acres which Cole acquired from the colonial government, either free or by purchase, between 1843 and 1855 and which he sold in 1856 before returning to England.

Cole’s Early History. Very little is known about the family of Robert Martin Cole. According to baptism records at St. Margaret’s Church of England at Westminster, London, Cole was born on 28 July 1788, being the son of Martin and Elizabeth Cole. He had at least one brother, named William, and sisters named Mary Ann and Elizabeth.

At the age of 12 Cole joined the Royal Navy on 12 February 1801 during the long war with France. He first served as an A.B., quickly advanced to Midshipman, and was promoted to Lieutenant on 17 January 1812. He saw action on various Navy brigs, sloops, and frigates, first in the Baltic and North Seas, and later in the North American, East and West Indian theatres of war. He served on the "Victory" and also on the "Terpsichore" when that frigate defeated the much bigger French frigate "Semillante" in a famous action off the Indian coast in March 1808.

In September 1815, following recurring fevers in the West Indies, Cole was invalided out of the Royal Navy as a lieutenant on half pay. He was then 27 years old. It appears that after 1815 he never returned to Navy service although he remained on half pay for some fifty years thereafter. Royal Navy records show that he was placed on the reserved list as a lieutenant in 1851, and was promoted to the rank of Commander on 23 March 1854 whilst still on the reserve list and living at Mount Kembla.

Although many Australian documents and records refer to him as “Captain” Cole, this appears to be a courtesy rank and title and it seems that Cole never attained this rank officially. However, in the Illawarra district he was known as Captain Cole. In his wills made as late as 1867 Cole described himself as “Commander in the Royal Navy.”

(Details of Cole’s Navy career are contained in O’Byrne’s “Naval Biographical Dictionary,” 1861 and other editions).

Little is known of Cole’s marriage except that his wife’s maiden name was Eleanor Reynolds, born in 1798 or 1799. Eleanor had a bachelor brother named James Langdon Reynolds who was a member of the Skinners’ Company of London and, apparently, a relatively wealthy man. The Reynolds family may have been London bankers.

The marriage of Robert Martin and Eleanor produced only one child, a son named Frederic Reynolds Cole. This son, born in London probably in 1819, came to be known as Frederick when he later
lived in the Illawarra district.

Nothing is known of the activities of Cole and his family between 1815, when he left the Royal Navy, and 1841. Census records show that in 1841 they were residing at Woodlands near Rhayader in Radnorshire, a sheep farming area in Wales. It appears that the family left from Woodlands to come to N.S.W. in 1842.

**Arrival in N.S.W.** Ship records in the Mitchell Library show that Cole and his wife Eleanor, together with their son Frederic Reynolds and probably a Reynolds relative of his wife, arrived at Port Jackson on 10 January 1843 as cabin passengers in the merchant barque "John Woodhall."

This barque of 380 tons left the Downs in England on 19 August 1842 with 32 passengers and a crew of 20, calling only at the Cape of Good Hope in its voyage of almost five months to N.S.W.

A copy of the official record of the voyage of the "John Woodhall" to Port Jackson in 1842-1843 is attached. (It will be noted that this document also names the vessel as the "John Woodall").

Although Cole was aged 54 when he left England, within months of his arrival in the colony he became interested in the Illawarra district which was then being opened up. The first land in this area had been taken up less than thirty years earlier.

Under government regulations of the time, Cole, as an officer of the Royal Navy with 20 years service, was entitled to receive a free grant of 200 acres of undeveloped land. "Farmborough Farm" now occupies the first land which Cole selected and obtained at Mount Kembla under this remission system.

(To be continued) —E. S. COLE.

(Researched, compiled and written especially for the present owners of "Farmborough Farm," Mr. and Mrs. Hans Van de Haar, by Edward Sydney Cole, B.Ec., of 11 Ben Boyd Road, Neutral Bay, N.S.W., a great-great-grandson of Captain Robert Martin Cole, R.N., in the hope that this record of a man of enterprise and stamina will remain always with the beautiful farm which he founded.

Printed by kind permission of the author.

The author would be pleased to hear from any reader who can provide any further material on either R. M. Cole or his son Frederick Reynolds Cole.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Wollongong City Library).

**DRUMMOYNE SOCIETY VISIT:**

We had the pleasure of a visit on 12th April by members of the Drummoyne Historical Society, guided, as visiting Societies usually are, by Mr. Bayley.

**MUSEUM NOTES:**

The garage has been demolished, and a temporary fence erected. The work was carried out on 12th April by an eight-man gang, after some strenuous preliminary work (for which the Museum Committee is very grateful) by Mr. Fred Healy during the preceding week.

**WANTED:** One pair of women's shoes, with 2½ to 3 inch heels, size 5 or larger. If you can help, please notify Mr. Maynes (29-1107) or Mrs. McCarthy.
Captain Cole of "Nonsuch"
The Early History of Farmborough

(Continued from May Bulletin)

Land Grants and Purchases

When Cole selected his Illawarra land in 1843 it was described officially as being situated in an unnamed parish at Dapto in the Illawarra in the county of Camden. Subsequently the whole area was named the Parish of Kembla and each of the five Cole holdings was denoted by a parish number.

According to land grant documents of the N.S.W. Registrar General, Cole was first granted 106 acres in December 1843. The official government price for land at the time was one pound per acre, but Cole received his initial grant of 106 acres free of charge under the remission system.

In January 1845 Cole acquired a further 100 acres adjoining his initial 106 acres. Of this further land he received 94 acres free of cost through remission—thus exhausting his remission entitlement—and he paid six pounds to the government for the residue of six acres.

In March of the same year, 1845, Cole took up an adjoining piece of 48 acres at the official price of one pound per acre. This 1845 purchase document, as do later documents, refers to him as "Captain" Cole.

There appears no doubt that Cole built his first residence on this particular land and that the present "Farmborough Farm" and residence is situated on part of that same land. It is believed that Cole's original small dwelling is incorporated in, and forms part of, the Farm residence which stands on the 1845 grant of 100 acres.

Cole named his farm "Nonesuch," or "Nonsuch," a name which is recorded on his wife's grave. It is said that this name was derived from his declaration, made when he first looked out from his new undeveloped land, that "none such view have I ever seen." However, 1855 deeds refer to the farm as "Mount Kembla Farm." It is believed that a later owner, John Blackman, gave the name of "Farmborough Farm" which soon became "Farmborough" as used today.

In December 1852 Cole took up a further 47 acres of nearby land from the government at a price of one hundred and sixty pounds fifteen shillings. However he soon sold this land, on 7 May 1853, to Lawrence O'Brien for two hundred and thirty-five pounds.

Cole's final purchase in the same area was in July 1855 when he took up another 123 acres, adjoining his 48 acre block, for one hundred and forty-seven pounds twelve shillings.

By the end of 1855 Cole held 377 acres at Kembla in one consolidated farm, the whole being acquired from the government for a total sum of two hundred and one pounds twelve shillings sterling.

The exact location of these land acquisitions of Captain Cole between 1843 and 1855 is shown in the Lands Department map of the Parish of Kembla. This map, compiled in 1961, shows the land taken up in this Mount Kembla area by the original settlers, record-
ing the name of the original owner, the area of each piece, and the present parish portion numbers of the blocks. It will be seen that Cole's lands were:

- Portion No. 8: 106 acres: acquired 28 December 1843
- Portion No. 21: 100 acres: acquired 29 January 1845
- Portion No. 157: 48 acres: acquired 25 March 1845
- Portion No. 122: 47 acres: acquired 7 December 1852

(sold 7 May 1853)

Portion No. 22: 123 acres: acquired 27 July 1855

It would appear from its location that the present residence of "Farmborough Farm" stands on Portion 21, the 100 acres of land which Cole acquired in 1845.

(The map also shows that Cole's son, F. R. Cole, took up 12 acres adjoining Dapto Creek and his father's 123 acres).

At this time the nearest centre to Cole's farm was Dapto, a village which commenced in 1834 when the Ship Inn was transferred there from Wollongong. A small school was built at Dapto in 1839 and at the time Cole acquired the last of his land in 1855 it is recorded that the village of Dapto consisted of about six cottages, a post office store, an inn, some church buildings, and a flour mill.

Other Activities

Lands Department records indicate that Cole was active in Church of England affairs from the time of his arrival in the Dapto area. A land grant dated 22 September 1846 shows that he was co-trustee with five other residents and William Grant Broughton, then Bishop of Australia, in acquiring 23 acres at Dapto for church purposes. The other five trustees were the Rev. Matthew Devenish Meares (then in charge of the Wollongong parish), William Sheaffe, James Shoobert, Richard John Hopkins and Robert Lloyd Davies. A small church, St. Lukes, was built at Dapto (near Brownsville) about this time.

The N.S.W. Government Gazette of 9 January 1844 records that His Excellency the Governor had been pleased to appoint Robert Martin Cole, "gentleman of Illawarra," to be a Magistrate of the Territory and its Dependencies. At the same time Cole was appointed a Justice of the Peace.

Soon after the family's arrival in Illawarra, Cole's only son Frederick Reynolds Cole, married Eliza Clarissa Smith, the eldest daughter of Charles Throsby Smith, the founder of Wollongong. The marriage certificate shows that they were married on 16 March 1844 by Chaplain M. D. Meares in the school house on Smith's "Bustle Cottage" farm at Wollongong, the school also being then used as a church. At the time of the marriage F. R. Cole was described as a surveyor residing with his father at Mount St. Thomas, Wollongong. Eliza Clarissa, whose mother Sarah was the first wife of Charles Throsby Smith, was just 18 at the time of the marriage.

It is interesting to note that about the time of his son's marriage Captain Cole was assisting Charles Throsby Smith financially. A deed in existence shows that on 8 October 1843 Cole lent Smith...
one thousand two hundred pounds on security of lands adjoining Smith and "Keera" Streets, Wollongong.

It is also recorded that Cole owned other land in the Illawarra, in addition to his Mount Kembla farm. He owned two farms of 130 acres at Fairy Meadow—one called Herme or Herms Farm—and he had an interest in land at Bulli and "Mount Corrimel."

(To be continued)

[Printed by kind permission of the author, Mr. E. S. Cole, B.Ec., of 11 Ben Boyd Road, Neutral Bay, N.S.W., who would be pleased to hear from any reader who can provide any further information on R. M. Cole or his son Frederic Reynolds Cole].

Stop Press:

WOLLONGONG HARBOR

The Society's Council learnt with alarm that work is in progress whereby part of the stone facings of Belmore Basin has been cut away and filled with concrete blocks to support bollards. Other concrete blocks have been placed for lightposts, while timbers are being run along the top edge of the stone facings. A new pump-house is being built of suburban and quite inappropriate design, materials and positioning. The work is being carried out by a government department, and all of it is considered to be unsympathetic to a locality which the Society has always held to be the core of Illawarra's early history, and hence the most important part of our heritage.

Fortunately, the local Heritage Committee was immediately up in arms, and has been strongly supported by the Society's Council. The coverage given by news media has been good. On-site meetings have been held, and an assurance extracted from the authorities that advice will be taken to minimize the effect of these works.

It is probably true that cosmetic improvements can be made, and the Society welcomes the assurance that they will be. But the worst feature remains, that such work could be implemented, even without the knowledge of the City Council. It is particularly alarming that the work embraces some of the recommendations of a project assessment, favourable to private boat-owners, which the public roundly condemned as obnoxious when it was publicly displayed last year. The official answer to this has been that the current works were contemplated before that report was received; but this was not disclosed to the public at that time, or since. Nobody knew of it until the operations started.

However, appropriate undertakings having been given, the matter can be left at that for the present, though the Society has recorded its alarm by representations to the department concerned, and to the Heritage Council of New South Wales.

The incident proves once again that one of the costs of retaining our sadly damaged heritage is eternal vigilance.

-E.B.-
Death of Eleanor Cole

Cole's wife Eleanor died at "Nonsuch" on 18 October 1855. Her grave was one of the first in the small burial ground at "St. Luke's" church which still stands beside the Osborne Memorial Church on the old Princes Highway at Brownsville. The little brick church can be seen down the hill from "Farmborough Farm." The epitaph on Eleanor Cole's gravestone, still legible, reads:-

"In Memory of
Eleanor
Wife of
Captn R. M. Cole, R.N.
Nonsuch Mount Kembla
Who Died There
18th October 1855
Aet 58"

Whilst the tombstone records that Eleanor Cole was aged 58 when she died, the St. Luke's register gives her age as 57 years.

Return To England

At the time of his wife's death in 1855 Captain Robert Martin Cole was 67 years of age. He had been in the colony for 12 years and, according to the records of a grandson, suffered continuously from injuries to the head caused by a fall from a horse. Soon after his wife's death he sold all his land and returned to England, arriving there some time in 1856.

Upon his return to England in 1856 Cole lived in London with his two nieces, Elizabeth and Emily Augusta Laing, the daughters of his sister, Mrs. Elizabeth Laing. He died in their house, 22 Sydney Street, Fullham Road, Brompton on 6 April 1869 at the age of 80 and was buried in the Brompton cemetery.

It is perhaps not surprising that Cole's death certificate shows his occupation as "Captain in the Royal Navy."

Cole's death in 1869 was later recorded on the tombstone of his wife Eleanor in St. Luke's cemetery, this epitaph being added:

"Also
Capt R. M. Cole, R.N.
Who Died in London
England
6th April 1869
Aet 84"

Sale of Cole's Lands

Whilst the sale of "Nonsuch" did not take place until after the death of Eleanor Cole (18/10/1855), it appears that Cole had planned to sell out some time before this event. Five days before his wife's death, on 13 October 1855, Cole signed an agreement for sale with Robert Haworth, a tanner of Sydney, wherein he contracted to sell for five thousand five hundred pounds most of his Illawarra lands
viz "the 377 acres of land called Mount Kembla Farm with Dwelling house and improvements where the Vendor resides . . .", together with two tenanted farms at Fairy Meadow of 130 acres, and his interest in Herme Farm of 162 acres. The agreement provided that the necessary documents were to be ready for execution by 15 January 1856.

The actual sale of Cole's 377 acres at Mount Kembla to Robert Haworth was completed on 22 January 1856. This Conveyance document shows that Cole sold Haworth the whole of his remaining Mount Kembla farm holdings of 100, 106, 48 and 123 acres, i.e. 377 acres in all, for one thousand five hundred pounds.

On the same day Cole also transferred his 130 acres at Fairy Meadow to Haworth for two thousand pounds. Thus Cole severed his connection with the Illawarra.

**Subsequent Owners**

It appears that Robert Haworth financed his land purchases from Cole through the Savings Bank of New South Wales, with which he had a large mortgage. Because of his financial problems, a month later Haworth sold the whole of the Mount Kembla farm of 377 acres which he had purchased from Cole. The new owner from 26 February 1856 was John Blackman of "New Town," Sydney, and the purchase price was two thousand five hundred pounds.

Whilst under the purchase contract Blackman was required to pay two thousand pounds of the purchase money direct to the Bank, Haworth made a handsome profit from his short ownership of the farm. It is reasonable to assume that Cole’s sale of his land at such a cheap price was at least partly attributable to an earnest desire to return to England as soon as possible.

Cole’s 377 acres remained intact during the long ownership of John Blackman "the Elder" from 1856 to 1915. However, following Blackman’s death on 5 June 1914 his executors in 1915 divided and sold the land in two parcels, thus commencing the break-up of Cole’s original lands and the reduction of "Farmborough Farm" to its present size.

Firstly, Blackman’s executors on 8th April 1915 conveyed 219 acres to Cornelius Clifford, a farmer of West Dapto, for one thousand and four hundred and twenty-six pounds fifteen shillings. This 219 acres was comprised of various parts of Cole's original 106 acres (Portion 8), part of his original 123 acres (Portion 22), and part of his original 48 acres (Portion 157). However, no part of Cole’s original 100 acres (Portion 21)—upon which the residence of "Farmborough Farm" now stands—was included in this sale.

Secondly, on the same date Blackman’s executors conveyed 166 acres to James Ernest Griffin, also a farmer of West Dapto, for one thousand four hundred and nineteen pounds ten shillings. This 166 acres was comprised of parts of all Cole’s original four holdings, i.e. parts of the 106 acres (Portion 8), part of his original 123 acres (Portion 22), part of his original 48 acres (Portion 157) and, significantly, part of the homestead block of 100 acres (Portion 21).

Thus in 1915 Cole’s original "Nonsuch" holding was broken up. That part of it which is now "Farmborough Farm," of 75 acres and the original residence, has had various owners since 1915 but the subsequent ownership has yet to be researched.
Cole's Son

The Cole association with the Illawarra did not cease with the return of Captain Cole to London. His only child, Frederic(k) Reynolds Cole, who was about 24 years old when he arrived in N.S.W. with his father and mother, remained in the area when his father departed and the son continued a long association with Wollongong.

At the time of his marriage to Eliza Clarissa Smith in March 1844 F. R. Cole was Surveyor to the Berrima District Council. He practised the occupation of surveyor in Illawarra for some years but later became an auctioneer living in Smith Street, Wollongong. He is recorded as an alderman of the early Wollongong Council 1861-1867, 1870-1874 and Mayor of the Council 1871-1873. In October 1878 he was appointed first Sub-Collector of Customs for the new Port of Wollongong, holding this position for some years before retiring to Waverley, Sydney, where he died on 11 March 1908 at the age of 89 years. His knowledge and experience made him a recognised authority on the early history of Illawarra.

Unlike his father, F. R. Cole had a large family of 4 daughters and 3 sons. His eldest son, John Reynolds Cole, born at Wollongong in March 1845, followed the tradition of his grandfather, Captain Cole, and took up the farm called "Cherry Bank" at Glenquarry, Bowral, in the eighteen sixties. This Bowral farm is still owned and operated by a great-great-grandson of Captain Cole.

(Printed by kind permission of the author, Mr. E. S. Cole, B.Ec., of 11 Ben Boyd Road, Neutral Bay, N.S.W., who would be pleased to hear from any reader who can provide any further information on R. M. Cole or his son Frederic Reynolds Cole).

(Concluded)

ORAL HISTORY—HELP WANTED

We should like to hear from anyone who would be interested in collecting oral history, recording reminiscences, and so on. If your interests are in this field, please contact the President (Mr. F. W. Osborne, phone 84-3550).

WE NAME IT

Have you seen the ads for "Whatsitsname Competition"? "You 'name' our beautiful coastline and surrounds [sic]. Let's get together and put our part of Australia on the tourist map."

In our ignorance we had supposed that our coastline was put on some sort of map by Captain Cook, with details filled in by Bass and Flinders. We also had an idea that it had been known to tourists for well over a century—in fact that it was described in "Journals of his Tours in New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land" by an obscure and little-known character named Lachlan Macquarie.

However, it now appears that the district has existed all these years without a name, and that tourists are therefore unable to find it. So we venture to submit an entry (which at least is not an imitation of an imitation of something in Florida, or the Riviera, or anywhere else), as follows:

"The beautiful coast from Stanwell Park to Gerroa should be known as ILLAWARRA."