MORE ABOUT SHERBROOKE

(From a letter to Mr. B. Rogers from Mr. C. W. Wales, a brother of Mrs. Drinkall, whose recollections of Sherbrooke appeared in the September Bulletin)

The reasons for there being a Sherbrooke was an area of volcanic soil deep in places and shallow in others. The rich soil and a good rainfall gave rise to a rain-forest with the usual lianas, staghorns, etc. There were large fungi which shone in the dark and which we called Blackfellow’s lanterns. The lianas were known as monkey ropes and were used as swings. The forest was partly drained by a small creek—predictably called Stony Creek—which we crossed by means of stepping stones on our way to school.

The timber was taken to a sawmill owned by Frank Knight—or Mr. Knight, as would be expected in those more polite times. Some men were employed at the mill and others felling the trees or hauling them by means of bullock-drawn jinkers. There were the remains of an ancient chute down the mountain side facing Bulli, down which logs had been slid in the past. The chute appeared precipitous from a distance, but could not have been, as I remember climbing up it as a teenager. I didn’t hear of any cedar being obtained at Sherbrooke, but the pews in the church were made of it. The church was known as a Union Church, as more than one denomination held services. When the church had to close the pews were distributed amongst the congregation.

Not all the people were connected with the sawmill. Blincoes ran a dairy-farm and the women-folk rode on horseback to Bulli, side-saddle of course, to sell the butter. The Martins were carpenters and had a deal of work building houses as the settlement expanded. Harry and Bob Gunberg, two Swedes, were the local boot-makers, or boot-menders I suppose. In the blackberry season Bob drove a horse in a spring-cart collecting tins of blackberries picked by most of the people. The berries in sixty-pound tins were taken to Bulli to be sent to Sydney for jam-making. The income from blackberries was important and Katie and Jimmy were likely to come to school better dressed after the blackberry season. Mrs. Wilson kept the post-office. I am not sure whether she sold groceries, but we used to pick up our bread there on our way home from school. Mr. Haberley lived at Sherbrooke but worked in the mine, at Bulli I suppose. Three of the Lovedays also worked in the mine but were remarkable in that they lived some six or seven miles from the mine, walked to Bulli on Sunday afternoon, and walked home again at the end of the week.

Although the soil and climate appeared suitable for fruit growing, especially apples, there were, I believe, only two orchards of any size, one owned by the Browns and the other by the Wales family. It was a tradition in the Wales family that their grandfather
had plotted the route down the Bulli Pass.

Although the Pass was so steep, the people always considered Bulli as their outlet. Most likely the swamps, large expanses of heathland and the Cataract Gorge had prevented Sherbrooke from being settled from inland. The only time I can remember the name Appin being used was when it was alleged that rustlers from that side had lifted some of Loveday's cattle. Two of the swamps were named Flynn's Swamp and Long Swamp. They stretched inland towards the Back River, which we considered the boundary of Sherbrooke in that direction.

Of animals there were still some kangaroo rats, small marsupials, which made "nests" in the tussocks and long grass. There were some wallabies and of course possums. On a tour just before we left Sherbrooke we went to Reeves' deserted property. We noticed that possums had eaten the rind of lemons and left the pulp, but had eaten the pulp and left the rind of oranges still on the trees.

Near the quarry was a building, the magazine which held the explosives. The building was made of turfs or sods as a safety precaution. The sods were easy to obtain, as close to the quarry the soil was very thin. In rainy weather water could not penetrate the basalt and tended to form blisters. We children used to jump on the blisters to make the water squirt out.

Most of the fences were made of posts and rails—split timber—but I remember some chock-and-log and cockatoo fences made of poles or logs. There were few large gates, openings to paddocks being mainly slip-rails—poles running through holes in posts.

Gunberg's house was Swedish style, being two-storied, but, I believe, of only two rooms. The roof was sharply pitched to shed the snow. There was a fall of snow at Sherbrooke around 1904.