O'BRIEN—A GOOD PRESBYTERIAN

Mrs. J. Priestley, of 36 Stanley Street, St. Ives, 2075, is seeking information regarding Thomas O'Brien, one of the veterans to whom the Veterans' Grants at West Dapto were promised. Mrs. Priestley writes:

Thomas O'Brien arrived in the ship "Orpheus" in September, 1826, as a Private with the Royal Veteran's Corp. He was accompanied by his wife Jane (nee Warnock) and three young sons—Francis, George and Edward (there could have been other children).

O'Brien upon his discharge in September, 1829, was given a Veteran's pension and a grant of 100 acres for his 37 years' service. The grant was titled "Veteran's Allotment No. 8, County of Camden, parish unnamed, at DAPTO, ILLAWARRA"; North-East corner on Dapto Creek, North boundary by Michael Mallon's Allot. No. 5, South boundary, Charley Clayton's Allot. No. 9. O'Brien employed 2 government as well as other servants on his grant.

The grant was transferred to his son Francis, who also applied for a further grant of 100 acres at Dapto in 1839; and had 50 acres transferred to him by his brother Edward. On one of Francis's requests to the Colonial Secretary he gives the intended name of the property as "Clontarf."

From the fact that Francis was a member of St. Philip's Church of England, Sydney, and was married there in 1839 to the eldest daughter of Edward Smith Hall, of 'Monitor' note, I have made the assumption that Thomas and Jane O'Brien would have been of the Protestant faith.

What I wish to find out is whether Thomas and Jane O'Brien continued to live at Dapto, where and when they died and their deaths recorded.

In a second letter Mrs. Priestley writes:

Since I last wrote to you I have come upon a reference to a Geo. Macfie, Minister of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland at Portland Head and Pitt Town, on three separate documents.

From the marriage certificate of Francis O'Brien and Georgianna Elizabeth Hall, he married them in March 1843 at North Dapto. Later a son Lucius Ormond O'Brien was baptised at the Parishes of Portland and Pitt Town by the same Geo. Macfie. In 1860 Geo. Macfie attended the burial of Francis O'Brien's father-in-law Edward Smith Hall, coming up to Bondi for the ceremony.

I would like to find out the name of the Presbyterian Church at North Dapto.

[The name "North Dapto" is new to the editor, but could possibly have been an alternative name for Brownsville, before the latter became official in 1883. But the old Dapto Presbyterian Church appears to have been at the south end of Dapto, about opposite the end of Cleveland Road. Can anyone enlighten us?—Ed.].
Apropos of “O’Brien—a Good Presbyterian” in the October Bulletin, Mrs. Eileen Irwin (nee Moran), a member of a very old Dapto family, comments:

“Dapto’s original Presbyterian Church would have been well south of Brownsville, and close to Cleveland Road, but on the eastern side of the main road. It stood, together with what seemed in my almost infant years a large building, which faced the main road, a shop and residence. Probably in the days when the Church was in use it was the Minister’s residence. According to my parents, brothers-in-law Harvey and Atkinson in their earlier days here conducted a shop there. I can remember a family named Zglinicki living in the residence, the wife acting as a dressmaker. I cannot say I have any memory of the Church itself, but I do remember the residence being demolished. It was established on a fine deep block of land which fronted the main road and extended back 335 feet at least, and was 60 or 65 feet wide, on the Reed Estate of 24 acres, on which also was the large and well-built (for those early years) Reed’s Hotel. My father, John Moran, used to walk from Tallawarra, where the Power Station now stands, to the Presbyterian Church to school, which was conducted by the Church Board. He attended there for three years until the family left the Lake and Moran’s Swamps, Tallawarra, for their own property at Cordeaux, where there was no school. The teaching at the Presbyterian Church must have been thorough, for he had a good knowledge of both written and mental arithmetic and wrote a good hand and read well. Some years after the demolition the Presbyterian community sold the block of land.

“Re the O’Briens of Presbyterian religion—I have never heard of them. North Creek sounds very like Mullet Creek, and on the north bank generations of O’Brien’s lived. Their farm house stood where the Golf Club House now stands, the highest spot on the farm, I believe, and was never flooded like the rest of the farm. The whole farm was sold by the last generation of O’Brien’s, two unmarried daughters of Tim O’Brien, to (I think) the B.H.P. Those two are now dead, but there is one daughter, Mrs. J. Fox, living in Wollongong. Those O’Briens and all others around here of the name were members of the Catholic Faith.”

[Mrs. Irwin has added some very interesting remarks on other aspects of old Dapto, which will appear in a future Bulletin].