A letter has been received from the Treasurer of the ‘William The Fourth’ Project Limited, Box 284, Raymond Terrace N.S.W. 2324. This is a Bicentennial project which aims to construct a ‘fully operational replica of the first ocean-going steamship built in Australia, the ‘William The Fourth’, to participate in the Australian Bicentennial Celebrations in 1988.

First, some history accompanying the letter:

The Williams River was discovered in the year 1801 by Lieutenant William Paterson, Lieutenant Grant and Ensign Barallier, surveyor and engineer. This followed the discovery in 1797 of the Port of Newcastle. The river was an excellent mode of communication and transport, enabling settlements to stretch along its fertile banks to Clarence Town.

Excellent timber was in plentiful supply, and with a trafficable waterway, William Lowe, pioneer shipbuilder of Australia, deemed it an ideally suitable site for shipbuilding.

Flooded Gum, growing in abundance at the site, was described as being the best timber to be found in the colony for the construction of vessels. It followed that five of the first twelve steamships built in Australia were launched from the Deptford yards at Clarence Town. Thus it was that the William IV, the first steam boat built in Australia of indigenous timber, was commenced in February 1831 at Deptford, Clarence Town and launched as a paddle-wheel, fully rigged with sail, in November 1831.

Described as a beautiful specimen of colonial enterprise, a vessel of astonishing speed, and one of which her owner, Mr. J.H. Grose, could be justly proud, the William IV made her maiden voyage from Sydney to Newcastle the week prior to 21 February 1832, under the command of Captain Taggart. She left Parkers Wharf at 7.30 pm, cleared the heads in 44 minutes and made Newcastle at 6.00 am the following morning. Schooner rigged, the boat was 80 feet in length, the ladies cabin 12 feet in length and the gentlemen's cabin 16 feet. The cabin fare from Sydney to Newcastle was 20 shillings.

Thus it began, and over the following years river transport by both steam and sail increased. The William IV plied the Hunter River till the end of 1835 with occasional trips to Port Stephens, Carrington and Brisbane Water. In 1836 she was purchased by the New Hunter Steam Packet Association and ran an eight-day service to Port Macquarie.
In the ‘forties’, she was engaged on the South Coast between Sydney and Jervis Bay, her cargo comprising butter, cheese and other dairy products for the Sydney market.

In 1845 she was running to the Clarence River and further north with Captain Taggart still on the bridge. For over thirty years the William IV traded along the coast of New South Wales and all that seems to be known of her then is that she was sent to the East in 1862 to engage in the river trade of China.

William IV was one of the very few early steamers that was neither wrecked nor recycled during her known history.

Now the letter:

The Directors of the William The Fourth Project Limited would like to make contact with your Society and its membership, and I enclose some information sheets on this major Lower Hunter area Bicentennial Project, already underway on the Williams River at Raymond Terrace.

We feel that the Illawarra area would have strong feelings of involvement with this project, as the original William The Fourth plied the Sydney-South Coast run for a number of years. When completed, it will be possible to arrange for the replica vessel to visit the South Coast for inspections and/or pleasure trips. It is a very big Project, which has already attracted a $250,000 grant from the Bicentennial Authority, as well as sponsorship from Commerce and Industry. However, all the assistance that it is possible to obtain is sought most sincerely.

We would like to invite your membership ($10.00) and support for this very unique historically-oriented Project, and would be pleased to hear from you of your interest. We will gladly forward any further information which you may require.

Yours sincerely, Cynthia Hunter.

CARAMATE

The Society has recently purchased a ‘Caramate’, which is a slide/sound projector similar to those often seen in use for advertising. In self-operating mode, it will show slides automatically with synchronised taped commentary. The picture can be projected internally through the machine’s own screen, or externally on to an ordinary screen for use like a normal slide projector, with or without taped commentary, either manually or by remote control.

A relatively simple microphone system will enable us to make our own tape/slide sequences if desired, or commercially made tape/slide sequences are available for hire or purchase. The National Trust has a number of these. We hope to use the Caramate in the museum as the first step towards converting the old air-raid shelter into a theatre. Towards that end, we have already procured 33 stackable chairs by courtesy of the City Council.