Sub-titled “The Story of Prehistoric Australia and Her People”, this book is a recent survey of the gradually widening knowledge about Australia’s first inhabitants. Brief mention is made of the excavations at Durras North, Burrill Lake and, closer to home, at Bass Point. The book explains the role played by the most recent ice age during which low sea levels facilitated migration from Asia to Australia without creating a complete land bridge: the waters to be crossed were never less than about 50 km wide, and whatever the route a number of such crossings had to be made.

Flood points out that we may never know how early the first migration was made, for as much as 150 metres of water could now cover the first seaside campsites. However, from the evidence available, Australia can claim a world first: the first known cremation of a human body, at Lake Munga, N.S.W. (P.44). Also at Lake Mungo, the practice of grinding and baking seeds to make a form of bread was begun as early as in the Middle East and anywhere else in the world (P.52).

Re. the excavation at Bass Point, there is more detail in the Wollongong City Library in a copy of a thesis by Sandra Bowdler entitled “The excavation of a south-east Australian shell midden showing cultural and economic changes”. One of the discoveries was that the aboriginal diet at Bass Point included seal and elephant seal.

F.W.O.

THE MOSS VALE - UNANDERRA RAIL LINK

In the year of BHP’s celebration of its first 100 years of history, it is only fitting that we should remember one of the great achievements connected with the beginnings of steel making at Port Kembla - Charles Hoskins’ contribution to the building of the Moss Vale-Unanderra railway line.

History tells us that but for the Hoskins Iron & Steel Co Limited, construction of this rail link would not have happened. There had been many attempts from the Moss Vale end to secure such a railway, even as far back as the turn of the century, but all attempts from that end had failed.

However, the coming of the Hoskins Kembla works in the twenties threw a fresh aspect on this very worthwhile venture. As early as 1922 Hoskins had in mind to shift the works from Lithgow to Port Kembla, to set up plant on the seaboard so as to minimise transport costs to a seaport and to tap the vast limestone deposits of the southern tablelands. The rail link was thus an essential part of the enterprise.

Charles Hoskins was a great driving force behind the scheme, pointing out to the Government the great benefits that would come from such a venture, not only as a means of hauling limestone to Port Kembla but also from the shorter rail haulage to southern ports and states.
for iron and steel, as well as superphosphate to Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Hoskins, in pursuing this scheme with great vigour, entered into an agreement with the N.S.W. Government to transport 100,000 tons of material over the line in its first year of operation, with a penalty of £25,000 if he failed to do so.

In June 1924 legislation was enacted for the building of the line and on 25th June 1925, the Premier Sir George Fuller turned the first sod for its construction. So after some fifty years of meetings and deputations the line was finally opened at Unanderra on 20th August 1932 by the Premier, Sir Bertram Stevens.

The inaugural train from Moss Vale consisted of 12 carriages, flag be-decked and crowded to the limit, for its first journey to Unanderra. One of its passengers was Sir George Fuller, the former Premier, who had officially started the line. Following the arrival of the train from Moss Vale, a large banquet was held for the official party at the Central Illawarra Council Chambers.

By 1932-33 the depression years were here and steel sales were low, so Hoskins failed to reach his guaranteed freight tonnage and had to pay the £25,000 penalty to the Government.

However, this railway line has continued to contribute to the prosperity of the Illawarra region. The Maldon-Dombarton rail link to connect to this line is going to bring more wealth in coal exports from the Burragarorang Valley and, possibly within the next ten years, from other mines beyond the escarpment. Further economic activity will be generated by the proposed grain terminal at Port Kembla which will be of benefit to grain growers in southern New South Wales. Wool could also be shipped through Port Kembla from the southern tablelands.

So some of the early pioneers who laboured so hard for his important rail link have laboured not in vain, but for the great prosperity of Illawarra and for generations to come.

Jack Maynes

SHOALHAVEN CHRONOGRAPH, SEPTEMBER 1985

‘Meroogal’ is in Safe Hands

‘Meroogal’ at Nowra has been purchased by the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales, which will use it as a museum house in a similar way to its other properties - Elizabeth Farm, Vaucluse House and Elizabeth Bay House.

A two-storied weatherboard structure in the picturesque Gothic style, Meroogal was built in 1886 by Robert Taylor Thorburn, a successful coach proprietor in Nowra, and part owner of the Homeward Bound gold mine and the Pioneer Claim at nearby Yalwal.
Three years later the brig 'Mary Ann' arrived in Sydney on 20 May 1822 and amongst her passengers were Jonathon Leak’s wife Mary and four of their children, Stephen 14, Ann 11, Elijah 6 and Kitty 3 with Lewis remaining in England until 1826 and one son having died. Also came John Moreton’s wife and their three children.

On July 1823 Leak obtained two land grants near the Government pottery works enabling him to start his own factory. Lewis, the eldest son, then aged 22 years, arrived in July 1826 on board the ship 'Fairfield' bringing with him a considerable quantity of moulds to continue the manufacturing of Wedgewood in the colony of New South Wales. By 1828 Jonathan was employing twenty free men at the factory. It was around this time that Jonathon’s health began to deteriorate and in February 1828 the pottery works was taken over by his two sons Lewis and Stephen. It was in this same year that he petitioned Governor Brisbane for a Conditional Pardon stating he was in a very weak state and that his wife was confined to bed and that the running of the pottery works was taken over by his two sons. He was granted a Conditional Pardon, although he had no rights to return to England.

Mary Leak survived for another 4 years until 1832 dying at age 50 years, whilst Jonathon died in 1838 aged 62 years.

Today we associate the name Jonathon Leak with the manufacture of ginger beer bottles although his pottery works made many more products.

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THE MOSS VALE—UNANDERRA RAIL LINK.

by
Jack Maynes
From December 1985 Bulletin.

After the story of the early steel industry in Illawarra it is appropriate to reprint an article from an earlier Bulletin regarding the influence by the Hoskins to request a railway line from Moss Vale to Unanderra. The following is the background of how that line came into existence. (Ed.)
In the year of BHP’s celebration of its first 100 years of history (1985), it is only fitting that we should remember one of the great achievements connected with the beginnings of steel making at Port Kembla - Charles Hoskins’ contribution to the building of the Moss Vale - Unanderra railway line.

History tells us that but for the Hoskins Iron & Steel Co Ltd, construction of this rail link would not have happened. There had been many attempts from the Moss Vale end to secure such a railway, even as far back as the turn of the century, but all attempts from that end failed.

However, the coming of the Hoskins Kembla works in the twenties threw a fresh aspect on this very worthwhile venture. As early as 1922 Hoskins had in mind to shift the works from Lithgow to Port Kembla, to set up a plant on the seaboard so as to minimise transport costs to a seaport and to tap the vast limestone deposits of the southern tablelands. The rail link was thus an essential part of the enterprise.

Charles Hoskins was a great driving force behind the scheme, pointing out to the Government the great benefits that would come from such a venture, not only as a means of hauling limestone to Port Kembla but also from the shorter rail haulage to southern ports and states for iron and steel, as well as superphosphate to Victoria and southern NSW.

Hoskins, in pursuing this scheme with great vigour, entered into an agreement with the NSW Government to transport 100,000 tons of material over the line in its first year of operation, with a penalty of £25,000 if he failed to do so.

In June 1924 legislation was enacted for the building of the line and on 25th June 1925, the Premier Sir George Fuller turned the first sod for its construction. So after some fifty years of meetings and deputations the line was finally opened at Unanderra on 20th August 1932 by the Premier, Sir Bertram Stevens.

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So, some of the early pioneers who laboured so hard for this important rail link have not laboured in vain, but for the great prosperity of Illawarra and for generations to come.

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**MUSEUM OPENING HOURS**

Wednesday & Thursday 12.00 noon - 3.00pm  
Saturday & Sunday 1.00pm - 4.00pm  
Public Holidays 1.00pm - 4.00pm  
Closed Good Friday, Christmas Day.  
Schools and groups by appointment. Contact Mrs M Christie 4228 0158.