mond. He ran into trouble over some unexplained affair in which he wrongfully detained a registered letter addressed to a Miss McCauley. Such a thing would never happen today, of course; either they simply would not deliver it, or would send in lieu a curt note to tell you to come and get it. But at that time the tyranny of distance was such that all mail was precious, and was awaited with special eagerness. So complaint was made, the act found to have been unjustifiable, and Hammond lost his job. (Hard times those: fancy losing your job for mere disobedience or malpractice!) From this decision he appealed to the Governor, who referred the matter to the Bench of Magistrates in Wollongong, and they in turn supported the dismissal, in which W.H. Christie, the Postmaster General, concurred. The change was operative from 1st June 1852.

Meanwhile, there being apparently no such thing as a secret in little Wollongong, Mr George Hewlett had, as long before as 29th March 1852, applied for the coming vacancy, to which he was duly appointed. From there he went on to become a leading citizen, a major storekeeper, agent for the E.S. & A. Bank for 36 years, and in 1859 one of the first aldermen of the new Wollongong Municipal Council. He was a by-word for respectability, but even he had a minor lapse into delinquency, if one may credit (as I do) a story told to me in my boyhood.

One hot summer’s day George was seen riding his horse down Crown Street in what must have been a mighty jovial mood, certainly for one so staid and respectable as he was. Indeed, he was all dishevelled and quite tipsy, to the amusement of the townspeople. It appears that he had ridden in the way of business to inspect an orchard at the back of Mount Keira. Not only was it a day of intense sultry heat, but he was, as ever, dressed in his conventional long black frock coat and top hat: was there anything else a banker could wear? So on arrival at the orchard he gratefully accepted a bottled refreshment specially dug out of the cool soil beneath a spreading apple tree. And very refreshing it was, too: so he had another, and another, little suspecting that he was being regaled on very old- and very potent- cider, of the rough sort known in Somerset as scrumpy, which would get a rabbit shickered at sight at a hundred yards. George was the unknowing bunny on this occasion; but, in fairness, from what one gathers, the lapse from grace seems to have been merely a belated, and quite innocent, sowing of his One Wild Oat.

Edgar Beale

MOUNT OUSLEY: ITS LOCATION, ORIGIN OF NAME, AND SPELLING

A routine enquiry addressed to the Society has again raised questions on Mount Ousley. In our Bulletin of October 1971 a theory was mentioned that the area was named after a Gideon Ouseley (sic), though the opinion was then favoured that the name derived from a “local identity”, Ousley Condell. Following inspection of old title deeds, the latter opinion seems to prevail to the point of near-certainty. To avoid dry-as-dust detail, the relevant deeds are identified and may be inspected by further researchers in the Registrar General’s Office, Sydney. But, by way of friendly warning, he or she will need some insight into the mysteries of Old System conveyancing, because the title was notorious for being both cranky and difficult, even doubtful, though now sound enough. Anyhow, from the title documents the broad story emerges.
By an instrument of 30-31 December 1839 David Chambers and Alexander Brodie Sparke, two prominent Sydney businessmen, conveyed about 218 acres of land, being Lots 19-23 on the plan of sale, to Ousley Condell, and about the same time Sparke and William Henry Kerr conveyed to him a further parcel of over 5 acres fronting Major Mitchell’s line of road, now Princes Highway, Fairy Meadow (in part). Condell’s total outlay was 1447 pounds ten shillings and one penny, which he financed presumably from his own resources with the later aid of a mortgage back to Kerr dated 11 January 1841 for 941 pounds (refs. Nos. 609, 610 and 611 Book U). Condell was then described as being of Sydney, Esquire, the inference being perhaps that his property was a farm-cum-country residence.

But whatever its purpose, Condell had bought at the end of boom times, probably paying inflated prices. Certainly he did not survive the depression of the 1840’s, because on 27 October 1843 Mr Justice Burton declared him bankrupt on his own surrender; or, as the phrase then went, Condell "went for a Burton". Values had apparently fallen drastically, because instead of his trustee in bankruptcy realizing his equity by sale and then paying out Kerr from the proceeds, as would have been usual, the trustee with Condell’s participation made over the grisly financial mess to Kerr as onerous property, the whole of the principal and interest being still owing (No. 338 Book 6). With or without the glory of residence on his landed estates, Condell had proved to be a speculator, briefly and unsuccessfully. Yet it seems that the place meant much to him, as will be seen.

Exit Condell, then, and enter Kerr, who held the estate for many years. By his will and codicils (proved in London and resealed in Sydney, Nos. 4241 and 5518), Kerr is described as being formerly of Sydney but then (6 August 1857) of Brompton, Middlesex, England. Since the will referred to estates received from his father, Kerr seems to have been well-to-do, not to mention that his wife Louisa Ann had her own separate estate. Certainly, after his death on 19 August 1858, his trustees continued to hold the land for many more years. Meanwhile, there is nothing in the records to give Kerr any local significance in Illawarra beyond his bare interest in this land. He and his trustees, as absent landlords, doubtless obtained some return on the outlay in the form of rent for a farm or, more likely, farmlets. So what had begun as a loss came good.

That was on 11 April 1883 when Kerr’s trustees held an auction and the sub-divided estate was disposed of. By then the Kerr interests had held the land beneficially for nearly forty years; but, curiously, the name Ousley, despite an association of only a few years, still held. This is shown by the fact that the estate was known at the time of auction as Kerr’s Mount Ousley Estate, and the name of the road westwards through it was Ousley Road.

Whence, then, the name? Since there is no evidence to the contrary, it would be unrealistic not to suppose that, despite his short association, Ousley Condell had bestowed the name. But why Ousley? Why not Condell? Here one can only surmise. The name is scarcely likely to have been chosen by Kerr, and least of all by his trustees, in honour of the defaulting mortgagor. Which puts the naming back to Condell. Ousley is surely an unusual christian name, so that it must have had more significance to the short-time owner than his surname. This suggests some important family association as the derivation of his christian name, a ref-
heritance perhaps to a person or family or place. Whatever the source, however, it seems that the owner from 1839 to 1843 deemed Ousley more appropriate as a name than Condell; and that is the name he probably conferred upon his realm of such brief authority. And that is the name which stuck, through the Kerr days, throughout their action, and so on into posterity.

Spelling? Any association with Gideon Ouseley (sic) is so tenuous and speculative, in the face of a direct link such as with Ousley Condell, as to warrant little further consideration, if any. True, at the time of the auction there were a few occasional spellings as “Ouseley”, but these can be put down to those imps which bedevil printers and copyists. The correct spelling must be assumed to be, then and now, the overwhelming usage of Ousley.

But where is Mount Ousley? At the time our Society’s Council was discussing the matter a senior office-bearer, who happens to live in “Mount Ousley”, asked this very pertinent question. Where indeed? The original locality may be described roughly as a sort of rectangle straddling Ousley Road proper (now called Mount Ousley Road: forget the freeway) which runs westwards from the Princes Highway. It went straight up the hill towards the foothills, and then down a little, to peter out in rural nothings, a dead-end. So in its rather short course it ascended a small hill, which a modern developer, in his unwisdom and drive for cash gains, would probably call Ousley Heights, before it dips in what might be called a humble obeisance to the main Illawarra Range and its escarpment. The rise is, after all, only a hill, but perhaps one cannot blame Conde - if he actually did so - in elevating it into a “Mount” in passing on the compliment or recollection doubtless inspiring his naming. But purism of that sort does not alter the fact that the name has spread beyond the original rectangle and hill well up into the foothills, like the itchy surroundings of an insect bite, if residents (including our senior vice-president) of “Pill Hill” will forgive the metaphor. In other words, as happens fairly frequently, the original “Mount” Ousley has burst the contours and topography of its confines. But that is now a fait accompli.

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