vented all the intended sports and demonstrations of the day at the end of the district was the "wet blanket" that damped the whole affair. The cavalry tournament that was arranged to come off was not proceeded with. The Protestant Alliance picnic that was meant to be a good attraction shared a similar fate, and in fact the whole town and district were in a state of mud and water. It will be noticed by the time table published in this issue that today and for the future until further notice to the contrary only one train a day will run between Kiama and Clifton and the intermediate stations (Saturday excepted), on which day a second train will run, leaving Kiama at 6 in the morning and returning late at night.

Illawarra Mercury, 10th November 1887

Postscript: The stations opened with the extension were Unanderra, Dapto, Albion Park, Shellharbour and North Kiama - familiar names, but if you think you know where they all were, you had better think again.

Unanderra and Dapto seem to present no problems, but 'Albion Park' was at the point where the South Coast Road crossed the railway on the level at the north end of the later Yallah platform. It owed its name no doubt, to its being the most accessible point to Albion Park township, but within two years a more direct road was made and the name was transferred to the new site. The original Albion Park became Yallah.

The only catch about Shellharbour is that it is not in Shellharbour.

The terminus, referred to in the Mercury report as Kiama, was, according to Singleton's 'Railway History in Illawarra, officially North Kiama, then optimistically referred to in the timetables as Kiama'; but in any case it was not in Kiama itself. When the line was further extended to Kiama, and the new station opened in the town, the older station reverted to North Kiama, and finally became Bombo.

Passengers must have had to be careful when asking for tickets!

PLANTING THE BURNING BUSH! 1

A hundred and fifty years ago the first regularly constituted Presbyterian congregation was established and the first ordained minister appointed. That congregation developed into St Andrew's Church, Wollongong. Though many other parishes were in later years carved out from the enormous original area it may fairly claim to be the mother Church of Presbyterianism in Illawarra.

Several factors contributed to its establishment at that particular time and place.

The town of Wollongong had been surveyed in 1834, giving the district a centre where a church to serve all Illawarra might be erected. Bourke's Act of 1836 ended the Church of England's monopoly of state aid, which was thereafter available to the churches and schools of other denominations. Presbyterian congregation were being formed into parishes and charges regularly organised according to the rules of the Church of Scotland,² largely under the influence of John Dunmore Lang, who was tireless in recruiting regularly ordained ministers for service in New South Wales. To this end he made several trips back to Scotland. On his third such visit, Lang advised the Colonial Secretary, Lord Glenelg, that Illawarra was one district in which the settlement of Presbyterian
ministers was earnestly desired by the resident Presbyterian population - even though that population fell far short of Lang’s dream of founding in Illawarra (at Kembla Grange of all places) a colony of God-fearing, Bible-reading, Sabbath-keeping, saxpence-saving Presbyterians.

Rev. John Tait was one of the ministers selected by the Church of Scotland as a result of Lang’s mission. On reaching Sydney in the North Briton on 27th September, 1837, he was provisionally appointed to the Illawarra district, and lost no time in starting his work. He arranged to hold services in the court house at Wollongong, then set out on horseback to tour his parish. It extended from Stanwell Park to the Shoalhaven, and there were few roads and fewer bridges. Dapto, Shellharbour, Kiama, Gerringong, Jamberoo, Coolangatta and probably Appin were among the places at which he conducted services.

At Jamberoo he preached in the barn of Minnamurra House, the property of Dr. Robert Menzies and at Gerringong on the verandah of Michael Hindmarsh’s home at Alne Bank. On 26th October, Hindmarsh wrote to his sister in Scotland “I had a long letter ready to send you but there was a minister of the Church of Scotland, a Mr Tait, who has only been in the colony a month, sent to our district to canvass for adult hearers. He stopped at my house two nights, and I have no doubt but he will get many more than is required, viz. 100 persons, when the government will then give him one hundred pounds as a salary, or if more than that number a proportionate sum agreeable to the late Act of Council here for the provision of the different churches. I hailed the arrival of Mr Tait with inward joy. We had family worship both nights by Mr Tait and he promises to preach here twice a month and visit us conditionally if he is appointed, which there is no doubt of.” A fortnight later, on November 11, he wrote, “Mr Tait has been appointed to our district, which I hope will prove a blessing.”

Evidently Tait soon found many more than the required hundred parishioners for in a memorial to the Colonial Secretary in January 1839 he states, “That besides ministering to more than a hundred people in and around Wollongong your memorialist makes stated visits to distant stations in the district, preaches to the people who assemble at them on particular Sabbaths and discharges other ministerial duties among them; that one of these stations is more than thirty and another more than fifty miles from Wollongong, where your Memorialist resides so that his periodical visits to them entails upon him a considerable expenses.”

By May 1838 plans for a church and the foundations of a tower had been prepared by James Hume, a Sydney architect, who preceded Blacket as architect of St Andrew’s Cathedral. In July of that year the Reverend John McGarvie, Moderator of the Presbytery of New South Wales, wrote to the Colonial Secretary recommending the appointment as trustees of the church at Wollongong of James Shoobert of Hearn Mount; Robert Carruth of Dunlop Vale; Michael Hindmarsh of Alne Bank, Charles Innes of Springhill and James Wallace of Lake Mount.

There is a persistent tradition that Throsby Smith gave this land for the church. Alexander Stewart, for instance, said, “In 1839 Mr. Tate [sic] got a present from Mr. C.J. Smith of a quarter of an acre of ground - the site on which the Presbyterian Church now [i.e. in 1894] stands at the corner of Crown and Church Streets.” Nevertheless it was, at any rate officially, a sale. On 22 January 1839 a half-acre block at the corner of Crown and Church Streets, purchased from
Charles Throsby Smith for fifty pounds, was conveyed to three trustees: James Shoobert, Robert Carruth and James Wallace.

If the tradition and the conveyance are to be reconciled, the most likely theory seems to be that Throsby Smith went through the motions of selling the land, received his fifty pounds, and made a donation of the same amount to the church. (Dr. Stuart Piggin, in "Faith of Steel", surmises that the site of St. Michael’s was conveyed by a similar operation).

By August 1839 the church, (the first permanent church building erected in the Illawarra district) had been completed and the trustees were trying to extract from the government its promised half share of the cost.

It appears from the long and sometimes slightly acrimonious correspondence that, in addition to the fifty pounds paid for the land, the building had cost eight hundred and twenty one pounds. Ultimately the trustees obtained the Government’s half of that, and paid the carpenters and plasterers who had been more or less patiently waiting. However with the thriftiness traditionally ascribed to Presbyterians, they had also sought to recover from the government half the architect’s fees of twelve pounds and half the five guineas legal costs on the conveyance, and on these items Sir George Gipps was adamant.

The newly-completed building was described in the Sydney Morning Herald as “a neat brick-built edifice in the Gothic style, from a design by Mr. Hume, and capable of containing three hundred people. The Herald added, "When the tower, which it is intended to erect in front, is completed, it will be a great ornament to the village, and it is at once creditable to the taste and zeal of those engaged in its erection.”

The interior arrangements, as described by Alexander Stewart, sound strange now, but were far from unique in churches of the period.

"When the church was first built, the congregation sat in boxes which resembled pig-styes. The boxes were square, and had a seat on each of the four sides, so that some of those sitting in them had their backs to the preacher, whilst others sat with their sides to him. These boxes were called pews, and each had a door to shut the people in or out . .... The platform on which the minister stands now used to have a sort of canopy over it, and the pulpit was an old-fashioned one."

The Sydney Morning Herald of 7th August 1839 reported the first service in the new church at some length: “Wollongong, on Sabbath, the 4th current, the newly-erected Presbyterian Church in this flourishing town was opened for public worship, by the Rev. John Tait . ....

The day was fine, and though from the late continued rains the roads were in a bad state, the attendance was numerous. The Reverend Gentleman appeared in an elegant new pulpit gown, presented to him by the ladies of his congregation, and commenced the interesting services of the day shortly after twelve o’clock. After an appropriate psalm was sung and an impressive prayer offered up, the preacher read a chapter from the Old Testament, and then gave out, as the subject of his discourse, Haggai, 2, 7, last clause, "I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of Hosts.” He pointed out the original application & meaning of these words in reference to the second temple, shewed that the presence of Christ, by which it was to be filled with glory, was not confined to the period of his personal appearance on earth, but was enjoyed whenever he had made a church.
He proposed to show that the Presbyterian Church was a church of Christ, because it is apostolic in its construction, sound in its creed, and evangelical in its morality. Under the three heads the preacher gave a Luminous & eloquent exposition & defence of the principles of Presbytery, the doctrines of the Church of Scotland, and the duties she enjoins on her members, & concluded the whole with a stirring appeal to his hearers. The service was concluded with that solemnity befitting the occasion, and all persons interested appeared highly gratified.

Evidently the Reverend John Tait was a preacher of the old Presbyterian school, who gave his congregation the sort of sermon they liked - solid, massive, and sometimes lengthy; something they could listen to “wi’ anxious pains, serious and happy,”

and think over and discuss afterwards:

“Half the week we piked the banes 3
And found them sappy.’’

So the Burning Bush was well and truly planted in Illawarra. One thing remained - the completion of the building according to plan.

This was accomplished four years later, and the church took the form in which it stood for just short of a century, in which it is still remembered by many old residents of Wollongong.

1. The Burning Bush and the motto, "NEC TAMEN CONSUMEBATUR" ("And it was not consumed" - see Exodus III 2) figure prominently in the badge of the Presbyterian Church.
2. The Church of Scotland by law established is a Presbyterian Church. It is in no way part of, or subject to, the established Church of England.
3. Picked the bones.

THE GOLDEN SANDS OF SHELLHARBOUR

Following up a letter which was printed under this title in the May Bulletin, Mr. B. E. Weston writes:

"I now find myself able to answer my query from information gained from the library of the Bureau of Mineral Resources and taken from an annual report on mining affairs issued about forty years ago.

The assay showed 15 grains of gold to each ton of black sand and with 480 grains to an ounce of gold it would have needed 32 tons of sand to produce one ounce if the gold content was constant.

Also the accumulation of gold bearing sands would need to be extensive and predictable.

If such conditions existed and with the help of modern digging equipment and a source of water plus the present price of gold there could be some merit in resumption of those operations under less primitive conditions and methods. But a very chancy prospect.”