"For Johnny Cakes the same mixture was used with cream of tartar added. The mixture was rolled out about one inch thick then placed in a greased frying pan and cooked over a fire, being constantly shaken to stop the dough sticking. It was then turned over by tossing it in the air and catching it with the pan. One becomes very good at this with practice. A Soda Loaf is similar, only the dough is shaped into a loaf, placed in coals and covered with hot coals for thirty minutes. There is nothing nicer, hot, with butter, honey or treacle. Fried bread was always a favourite for a change."

NOTES:—

1. The formula for making rennet sounds less repulsive if it is made clear that only the cleaned stomach-membrane of the calf was used. Nowadays some junket tablets would serve better.
2. One suspects that the curds were not so much "wrung through cheese cloth" as allowed to drain while suspended in the cloth.
3. The "large wooden vat" would normally be better described as a cheese mould, these being of varying sizes. Our Museum owns several. A large wooden vat would of course make a very large cheese indeed.
4. A reminder is timely that the camp oven is no more an instrument for cremation than any other cooking oven: a remark prompted by a recollection of some would-be helper who once misguidedly, behind my back, stoked up a slow-acting heap of coals in which I had a damper going nicely in the camp oven. The result was, as P.G. Wodehouse once wrote, "In came the cook with a burnt offering". Camp oven heat is meant to equate with that of any other oven, appropriate for the culinary masterpiece in hand. In daylight the coals, either on the ground or on the oven lid, need only be grey; in the dark they have only a dull glow; at either time the hand waved above tells you how hot they are. The same principle applies when the damper is cooked direct in the coals. True, the late Ken Thomas used to say that a good camp cook would sometimes throw on the lid of the camp oven some wisps of bark or dried leaves for a quick, sudden heat to brown the top of a cake, for instance, or some such special purpose; for my part, I have never got round to that sort of esoteric fancy-business. But I have no doubt that Mrs. Henry Angel often did.

Edgar Beale

A QUESTION OF RIGHT—OF—WAY

The lives of engineers working on the construction of the Illawarra railway line were not meant to be easy. Not their greatest problems, but nevertheless problems, were the various lines connecting the collieries with the harbours and jetties from which the coal was shipped. One such line was that from the foot of the Mount Pleasant Colliery incline to Wollongong Harbour, which had been operating for almost a quarter of a century, at first with horses, then, since 1884 with steam locomotives. Both the Mount Keira and Mount Kembla lines had been originally laid to a peculiar gauge (variously stated as 3 feet 8 inches and 3 feet 8½ inches), which someone somewhere had worked out as the most suitable gauge for horse traction. When Mount Keira went over to steam, its track was converted to standard gauge (4 feet 8½ inches), but Mount Pleasant had remained unchanged (incidentally producing at Wollongong Harbour a section of mixed gauge three-rail track whose loss railway enthusiasts have never ceased to
lament). Its odd gauge prevented the Mount Pleasant company from buying locos off the peg, and it had two engines built in Belgium to the designs of Louis Billett, the engineer at the colliery. They were small even for such a narrow gauge, but no doubt adequate for their job - all loaded trucks went downhill, and only empties had to be hauled back against the grade. But their brakes left a good deal to be desired.

Some bright boy in Sydney, knowing as much about Wollongong as Sydney officialdom usually does, had proposed to use the Mount Pleasant line to give rail access from the main line to Wollongong Harbour. Finally it registered that the difference of a foot in the gauges made this difficult. The connection was made to the Mount Keira line, and the main line and the Mount Pleasant line crossed by a simple right-angle crossing on the level.

The Mount Pleasant company had hitherto devoted as much attention to safe-working as the colliery railways of those days generally did - virtually none. It saw no reason to change now. The main line was still in the hands of the contractors, who, being birds of passage, saw even less reason to worry. At the date fixed for opening the Wollongong-Clifton section as a public railway, though an isolated one, the Government inspectors were still arguing with the contractors about various matters which they claimed were incomplete or unsatisfactory. Nevertheless the opening ceremony was performed as arranged and though the line had not been handed over by the contractors, the Government Railways' trains plodded up twice daily to Clifton, taking fifty minutes for the journey.

So here was this crossing of two lines, at right angles on the level, being used by the trains of three different owners. There was no interlocking to prevent signals giving conflicting indications; in fact there were no signals. To confuse matters still further, the Bulli Road crossed both railways on the level in the immediate neighbourhood (though road traffic was not involved in the affair now to be related.)

Nemesis had been hovering for months over the Mount Pleasant company and the contractors. Within a week of the official opening she struck.

The Mercury of 25th June 1887 reported;

BALLAST AND COAL TRAINS COLLIDE

Considerable excitement was caused in town on Thursday when it became known that the contractors' engine, "Gladstone," and the Mount Pleasant Coal Company's engine, "Illawarra No. 2," came into violent collision at the crossing of the two lines. The news spread with wonderful rapidity, and soon a large crowd gathered at the disaster. On reaching the crossing the spectator immediately became aware of the violent nature of the collision, the Gladstone being canted over and only prevented from toppling down altogether by the obstruction given by the picket-fence there, which also was badly shattered; the Mount Pleasant locomotive lying at right angles with that railway, broken, strained, and looking a complete wreck, a ballast truck telescoped on to the Gladstone with one of its buffers piercing through the engine's smoke-box, the truck itself being badly damaged; eight or nine coal waggons more or less shattered, five or six being completely wrecked, with their contents scattered hithor and thither, and the rails at the crossing twisted on either side to a curve. The matter for surprise was that no lives were lost. On the ballast train were five persons,
including the guard (G. Quixley), the driver, the stoker, Mr. J. Fairclough (Government Inspector over the platelaying and ballasting) and the Government guard, who always accompanies the contractors’ engine on her trips since the opening of the line. On the coal train were the Mount Pleasant Company’s engineer (L. Billett), and his stoker (H. Edwards). It would appear from what would be gleaned by our reporter that the collision took place about 12.15. The Mount Pleasant coal train had left the “lay” some distance up the incline about noon, and the engine-driver, as was his custom, blew his whistle almost all the way down. On nearing the engine-shed close to the main-road and the crossing he received an intimation that the line was clear, and he thereupon continued on his way. Just at the same time the contractors’ train came steaming southward and when emerging from the cutting at the rear of Mr. James Anderson’s the whistle was sounded as a warning to the Mount Pleasant officials and the travelling public. The guard noticing that the driver of the coal train was apparently making no attempt to stop his engine, signalled his driver to reverse engines and put on brakes, the other persons in the ballast-trucks also putting on brakes. Unfortunately they were unable to stop the train, though they succeeded in slackening pace considerably. The result was that only the tender managed to get across the Mt. Pleasant railway, and when the Gladstone was right across the track the other locomotive came crashing into her, knocking the Gladstone off the rails. The Illawarra being brought to a standstill by the collision, and having a heavy weight of trucks behind her, was first forced clean into the air and then in a direction parallel with the Gladstone and at right-angles with the direction in which she was going, a number of wagons being smashed into atoms by the concussion. Both drivers stuck to their engines till the last and though somewhat severely shaken escaped without any serious injury. Billett being the only person who was hurt, his arm being slightly injured. Mr. Fairclough, who was riding in the ballast engine was pitched out against the fence, and had a narrow escape, but fortunately escaped with nothing worse than a shaking. Neither the coal company nor the contractors had a signal-man stationed at the crossing. Had there been such a man at the crossing it is certain the accident should have been averted. Both the company and contractors soon had a number of men at work to clear away the debris, which blocked all traffic along both railways. The early afternoon Government train had to pull up north of the crossing, setting down her passengers and taking up passengers for the north. By dint of strenuous exertions the Mount Pleasant locomotive was got on to the company’s line early yesterday morning, when it became apparent that she was injured to such an extent that she is practically useless. The Gladstone was got on the rails yesterday afternoon, and after a few repairs necessary to enable her to travel were effected she was taken to her berth at the quarry by one of the Mount Kembla Company’s engines; and communication is thus re-established between Clifton and Wollongong. From the account of the matter given by each of the persons in charge of the respective trains it does not appear clear with whom the blame rests, and the task of deciding will no doubt be left to the judges of the Supreme Court. It is certainly very evident that one or the other or both must be at fault, and rumors are abroad that very narrow shaves had occurred previous to this collision.
BILLET'S VERSION

Louis Billett, the engineer in charge of the Mount Pleasant Company's engines and who was driving No. 2 at the time of the collision, in the course of an interview with our reporter, said that he was bringing down a train of 26 wagons. Seeing several persons on the line in front of him he blew the whistle three or four distinct times. Looking out to see that the line was clear, he got the signal from H. Edwards, a line repairer, that all was right and coming on had nearly reached the main road when his attention was drawn by the stoker, (H. Edwards, jun.,) to the contractor's train nearing the crossing. It was too late to do anything to prevent a collision, and he remembered a concussion and being thrown from one side of his engine to the other, injuring his arm to some extent.

The lad Edwards jumped off just before the collision occurred. Billett avers that he had steam shut off, and with a heavy train of coal trucks behind him coming down a steep incline of something like 1 in 30, he found it necessary to put on his brakes all the way. He was travelling at the rate of about 9 miles an hour, and in his opinion the ballast train was travelling at the rate of about 20 or 30 miles an hour. The engine had only just been put in working order, and on that account he was driving himself. The engine was only a new one having been in use something like 14 months. He was perfectly satisfied that she was completely disabled and only fit for old iron, being so much wrenched, twisted and broken as to be of no further service. She weighed 18 tons, was built in Belgium in 1885, and cost 1400 pounds, and with the exception of being on a larger scale than the Company's No. 1 engine, which was designed by himself, was constructed on almost the same lines. Billett says that while he was not aware of the approach of the contractor's train until reaching the main road, when it was impossible for him to avert a collision, owing to the heavy weight behind, the driver of the other train must have been aware of his approach, and having a light train could have stopped had he been going at a reasonable pace. Billett has been engaged at Mount Pleasant for about 14 months, and is a certified engineer. He complained that he had intimated to Mr. Logan frequently that a signal man should be placed at the crossing.

George Beadle, engine-driver in the employ of the Mount Pleasant Company who was at the engine shed at the time in question, corroborated Billett's statement as to the latter having no steam up, and blowing his whistle for a considerable distance before reaching the shed. When the signal that all was right was given to Billett there was no sign of the contractors' train, but immediately after h (Beadle) heard the whistle, which he states was only sounded by the Gladstone's driver at the culvert about 50 yards south of the mouth of the cutting, and not before the train reached the cutting. Apprehending danger he rushed out of the engine-shed to worn Billett, but he was too late, the coal train having then passed the shed, and the collision took place almost immediately.

(TO BE CONTINUED)
Therefore, as both Wollongong and Randwick Municipalities were gazetted (and therefore constituted) on the same day, Randwick Council has no grounds upon which to state it was the first of all districts in Australia to become a Municipality. It may have been the first, but so also was Wollongong.

Lynch and Larcombe (p.63) had actually stated “Wollongong shared the honour with Randwick of being proclaimed on the same day”. Perhaps the Mayor had not bothered to read the work to which he was writing a Foreword!

As recently as 1985, Randwick Municipal Council had proclaimed in its Yearbook:

The Municipality of Randwick, with the exception of the City of Sydney, is the oldest in New South Wales, having been proclaimed by the State Government on February 22, 1859 - more than 126 years ago. The City of Wollongong has frequently claimed the honour, and although Wollongong was proclaimed a municipality on the same day, Randwick must take precedence since its application for incorporation was made more than a week ahead of Wollongong.”

According to the Act of 1858, the date of lodgement of the Petition seeking incorporation as a municipality is inconsequential. It is only the date of Proclamation, as published in the Government Gazette, which is significant. Therefore the “first Application” argument has no legal basis.

In summary, the Councils of Wollongong and Randwick can both lay claim to being the first districts to attain Municipality status. However for either to singularly proclaim such, to the exclusion of the other, shows a disregard for the working of the 1858 Act upon which any legal argument should be based.

Wollongong therefore has just as much right to proclaim itself the first Municipal Council in New South Wales as does Randwick, though both forget that the Council of the City of Sydney had existed before either of them.

Michael Organ
20 August 1988

[If Randwick’s motto is “Semper Prima”, ours might be “Nulli Secunda” “Second to None” - Ed.]

A QUESTION OF RIGHT-OF-WAY

(Continued from August Bulletin)

One would have thought that the collision would have scared all concerned into good behaviour, but a letter from Mr. Billett published in the “Mercury” of 20th December 1887 claimed that the Gladstone was still misbehaving.

DANGER ON THE LINE.

To The Editor of the Illawarra Mercury

Sir, This morning I was coming down the Mount Pleasant Company’s tramway with 26 waggons of coal, when I saw the railway contractors’ engine “Gladstone” emerge from the cutting immediately north of the crossing at full speed. Up to that time the engine-driver had given no sign of his approach by blowing the whistle, and I had all I could do to stop my engine before getting dangerously close to the crossing. The “Gladstone” Driver was travelling at four times the speed I was making, and it was only
with great exertion that I averted another collision. This engine-driver seldom blows the whistle, and travels over the double crossing at dangerous speed. The railway contractors should put on a man like the driver of the Government engine, who blows his whistle every time he approaches, and in sufficient time, and also comes slowly over the crossing. I hope you will publish this, as it may act as a warning to the "Gladstone" driver, and perhaps be the means of preventing serious damage to property and mayhap prevent loss of life.

LOUIS BILLETT

The Gladstone’s defenders wasted no time. On the same day that Billett’s letter appeared, four of them hastened to write to the "Mercury" rebutting Billett’s allegations. Charles Brown, the driver of Gladstone, wrote:

Sir, It is with much reluctance I crave a little space in your valuable paper to deny a statement, made by a person signing himself Louis Billett, in this morning’s paper. Having heard of Mr. Billett’s skill in “colliding with trains” for instance, as on the 23rd of June last - it made me very careful when approaching that "Pleasant” crossing; for certainly he is not one I care to come in “contact” with. Now, sir, I deny in toto that there was the slightest danger of a collision yesterday. No unusual effort was made by me or my fireman to pull up the train, as I had it well under control, and usually have, particularly when Mr. Billett is about. Fortunately for me, there was a gentleman (not in any way connected with the railway or contractors) who was much amused at the capers cut by Mr. Billett and his assistants. A Government guard also travels with us, whose duty it is, as an experienced man, to keep us in check, if necessary. As a matter of fact, sir, I could have stopped my train a quarter of a mile further back, had I liked, instead of the place I did (two hundred yards off the crossing), so well had I the train under control. With reference to Billett stating that I seldom sound the whistle when approaching this paricular crossing, I positively deny the assertion, as I am very attentive to my duty at all times, especially when nearing such places. Mr. Billett’s statement that I travel over the double crossing at a dangerous speed is also entirely without foundation. I am particularly cautious at this place, for my own safety as well as for that of Mr. Billett. In conclusion, I wish to state that if Mr. Billett is desirous of avoiding collisions in future he should keep his train under better control, and not have his engine-wheels skidding and two assistants spragging the wagons when approaching such a dangerous place. Apologising for troubling you for space to reply to such nonsense, I am, & c.,

CHARLES BROWN

December 20, 1887

His evidence was corroborated, in whole or part, by Logan & Co (his employers), by his guard, and by “A.S. Artis, Wharfinger, Bulli”, who was “a passenger on the Gladstone”, but claimed that, as he knew neither of the drivers in question, he “merely wrote this in the interests of truth and justice”.

Apparently there were still no signals, and drivers relied on whistling and braking (or hoping that the other driver would brake) when approaching the crossing. But the problem was finally solved when the Government Railways took over the main line. On 26th September 1888 a week before the official opening of the through line between Sydney and North Kiama, a signal-box with interlocking frame, stop signals and catch-points on the colliery line, and
distant and home signals in each direction on the main line, were brought into use, leaving little room for further disputes about right-of-way.

NOT ACCORDING TO PLAN

Apparently satisfaction with the opening of the through railway and the arrangements for the accompanying celebrations was not as universal as the Mercury's main report suggested. The paper's Albion Park correspondent was thoroughly disgruntled:

RAILWAY DEMONSTRATION—There are many about here who will, for some time to come, bear a lively remembrance of their trip to Wollongong on Wednesday last. After seeing what was to be seen, and hearing all they thought worth listening to at your gathering, they embarked on the 4 o'clock train for home, and some for Kiama, to see the fun there. On arrival at Dapto, the train was wired to stop, to allow two others to pass, that was done; but yet another wire, this time from Kiama—"Keep the line clear for the Governor." So there they had to remain in the carriages until the Vice Regal train returned and passed them. At last, after a vexatious delay of some hours, a start was made, but oh! horror; past Albion Park station they fled likewinking, all to be seen being passengers' buggies waiting to convey them home. Past Oak Flats without a pull, and on to Shellharbour they sped, without a stop. The guard there, with a smile fit to adorn the face of a "Moathon Ohinoo," asked if there was any one for Albion Park. He had not to wait long for a reply. Many came forth in gulps, stutters, and many double shotted from wide open mouths bordered by flame coloured sheets. "Nothing for us thm, but take you to Kiama and bring you back," was the consolation offered. All that was done, and the happy excursionists of the morning were landed at the South Coast crossing about 10 p.m., eventually reaching the Park about eleven at night - some tired, some thirsty, but most, just savage. Among the passengers as far as Dapto, were some of the Illawarra Light Horsemen, who were going through to escort the Governor from Kiama terminus to the show ground. They got out at Dapto, through the courtesy of the station master, and so got home pretty early in the evening - safe, but by no means in a good humour. In Wollongong it seems they were kept for about a couple of hours under a broiling sun, and never asked if they had mouths. Finding that standing outside the Town Hall, listening to the popping of corks and clicking of knives and forks was not likely to satisfy their individual wants, they betook themselves to an adjacent pub., and procured at their own expense whatever was obtainable. Being aware before they left Wollongong that a good spread was waiting them it may be imagined they were not too pleased at the Dapto delay. If ever a hostile foe threatens your city, Captain Weston's gallant troup won't forget you, that you may rely on.

NAVAL GOVERNORS AND A GATHERING OF THE JOHNSTON CLAN

Our indefatigable veteran correspondent, Mr. Bert Weston, writes:

As you may imagine the many descendants of Lieut-Colonel George Johnston, one time Lieut-Governor of N.S.W. and of Esther his wife, and amongst whom I