These photographs were arranged under the following headings: A city changes; The land is settled; Industry develops; Help preserve our heritage; That was life; Leisure time; The working day; Getting around; Life and death; Correctly dressed; and Visit our museum.

These photographs were then placed under Frank Osborne’s trusty old Pentax. Some of the resulting copies were then carried around the district to match them up with the modern scene. “Now” photo were then taken to form a number of “then and now” matched pairs.

Display boards were lent by Lysaghts and the exhibit all came together by the due date. The display was set up in its tent at Brandon Park on the evening of Friday 7th, with generous help from the McCarthy and Pezzutto families, so all was ready for the opening on Saturday 8th.

All went well the first day. Enthusiastic volunteer supervisors hosted a continuous stream of visitors, virtually all of whom showed great interest. Such positive response was indeed encouraging.

By closing time on Saturday evening, however, westerly winds had started to rise, threatening tents and contents. Very wisely, Amelia and Tony Pezzutto decided to fold up the display boards, wrap them in plastic and lay them on the ground in case disaster struck during the night.

Disaster did strike! About 4.00 a.m. Sunday came the call to salvage what remained. Five of our members had an unscheduled meeting in the darkness of early morning, dreading what they might find. However, Amelia and Tony had done their work well, so the whole exhibit escaped damage, a little dusty but still in good shape, which was more than could be said for the tent.

The exhibit was then returned to the museum, dusted off and re-erected there by normal Sunday-morning breakfast time. The roster was rearranged to enable the museum to open free of charge for the remaining three days of the exhibition, and great efforts were made by Joyce and Amelia to secure publicity to this effect. For example, some of our members may have heard Amelia on ABC radio at 9.33 a.m. on Monday. Thanks are due for the splendid co-operation of all our workers and supervisors who made this possible, and especially to Dianne who devoted so much of her own time to the cause.

It was very disappointing that our public exposure was cut short in this way, but we can take some comfort from the fact that we still have the photographs. Rumours have been heard that another effort will be made to show them in a different venue at a later date. Watch this space for further developments.

F.W.O.

THE PILOTS COTTAGE, KIAMA

ESTABLISHMENT AND SURVIVAL FOR A SMALL MUSEUM

(Talk to Illawarra Historical Society on 5th October 1988 by Mr. Ben Meek, President, Kiama and District Historical Society Inc., and Chairman, Illawarra - Shoalhaven Branch, National Trust.)

1. OUR STARTING POINT
2. ESTABLISHING THE PILOTS COTTAGE - 1983 - 88
3. KEEPING IT RUNNING APRIL, 1988 to ??
4. WHAT HAVE WE LEARNT SO FAR?
1. Our starting point
1.1 How our Historical Society got access to the Pilots cottage and then restored it is a long story, and not one for the present. I shall start talking tonight at the point where our small Historical Society, with 50 members, had succeeded in renting the historic Pilots Cottage from Kiama Municipal Council for $480 a year; had already rescued it from a near-derelict state and restored it close to its original state as an important heritage building, and was about to turn it into something else.

1.2 We started with different views on what we should do with it and with a lot of strongly argued disagreement. With only five rooms, the Cottage was too small for a conventional museum collection. We didn’t own any artifacts anyway. Within 25 miles there were already two large collections of interesting artifacts already open to the public - at Berry and at the Illawarra Historical Society.

1.3 And at least some members didn’t think a conventional museum was what we should have anyway. They believed that people can now see on TV, without leaving home, more interesting artifacts, displayed in a much more interesting way than they can be in a Museum. Even the Power House Museum, with $90,000,000 to spend, could hardly rival the quality of what we can now see on TV.

2. Establishing the Pilots Cottage, 1983-1988
2.1 We finally decided to seek funds, from the N.S.W. Bicentennial Council, to set up the Cottage as “a heritage centre, museum, research centre and a starting point for historic walks” as well as the headquarters of the Historical Society. We were successful with our application mainly because we had checked carefully and found what kind of project the Bicentennial Council was anxious to fund; and we worked out that we would be wise to propose heavy reliance on consultants (perhaps the fact that we got voluntary help from a well-known consultant on costing proposals also had something to do with this.) We applied in late 1984 for a grant of $59,000, at which time Kiama Council had not yet established its local bicentennial committee; and in March 1985 we were advised that we had succeeded in attracting a grant for $50,000.

2.2 One of the biggest and most important arguments was about the use of consultants and other advisers. Some of our members wanted to do everything their own way. Others perhaps erred on the other extreme.

2.3 Finally, we did end with at least a partial consensus - or, at least, reluctant agreement - that we should use consultants. The consultants forced our Society to think more deeply about what it wanted, and about what the community needed, and about the need to be professional in our approach if we were to succeed in getting non-historians and non-antiquarians interested in our Cottage. (We all knew that those groups would visit our cottage even if the displays were lacking in style and quality).

2.4 But we did find out further that consultants are only as good as their clients. What was also essential was local knowledge - and local style and flavour. The best results came when the two worked together. We were fortunate, because we had members ready to do the research for our displays, and some with design skills. In particular, two Society members took the project to their hearts at the critical last stage and worked almost full-time on it for
several months before the opening day. One was a draftsman and the other had a special flair for design, and both knew how to work effectively with a consultant and how to use the deep local historical knowledge of our other members.

2.5 One major element in our planning came from my wife, who noted that Kiama Hospital's establishment committee, just 100 years before, had resolved to meet once a week until the Hospital opened (which it did, successfully, in March, 1887). So, our planning committee did likewise and we met once a week from then until our opening. This proved to be a master stroke - we were able to have short meetings often, we kept a list of outstanding work, and nothing important could get lost on the way. This also helped us keep our local flavour and style.

2.6 We wisely fixed our opening date for early in the bicentennial year - 10th April, 1988. (If it hadn't been then, we would still be getting ready for the opening.) On the big day, we had the new Minister for Local Government and Planning, the Hon. David Hay to open the Cottage. He was so new that we didn’t get his brass plaque done until after the day. He was also so new that we knew before he and his staff did that his portfolio included heritage matters, and that he was therefore the appropriate minister to open our building.

2.7 And, what did he have to open? We had kept close to our original plans, and had:

* two rooms of permanent displays - one of Kiama before the building of Robertson Basin in 1876, and one of Kiama after that date. These were of high professional quality, relying heavily on photographic material, and with one three-dimensional display (of George Bass) to catch the visitor's eye.

* one room for changing displays - our first was for the local newspaper, celebrating its 125th anniversary, and all that under the control of the Weston family. And Mrs Weston and Weston and Company were very helpful with printing, photo-typesetting and publicity.

* the historical resources room - with a big table for students to work at, and some limited research material.

* a meeting room to hold about 40 people at a pinch, and with $6,000 worth of audio-visual equipment still in packing cases.

* a kitchen, a work room, a small store and darkroom.

* a well-fitted out entry point with shop facilities.

* like yourselves, a basically intact, well-preserved heritage building on a prime site on the local tourist trail. And already a good local reputation for being helpful, e.g. it was already the traditional place for Australia Day ceremonies.

3. Keeping it running April, 1988 to ?? - Survival

3.1 We have now been open for nearly six months and can start to evaluate the Cottage. Each of its different parts are helping us to attract visitors, and thus to provide the entrance monies we need for survival:-

* the two main permanent displays are the starting point to get people interested in our local story - in two rooms each 12 feet by 14 feet, we can attract attention and interest if our displays are lively and professional
the room for changing displays allows the local community to have a part. We cannot accept everyone’s artifacts but we do let local groups put up displays for limited periods. This will make them happy; they will come to look; we have something new to advertise, and people will know that there is always something new at the Pilots Cottage.

* in the Historical Resources Room we have a long way to go. We see our purpose as being partly to preserve the past but mainly to encourage an interest in the study of history. We see an urgent need to have more material, and have in readily accessible, on local historical themes, and particularly the themes that are displayed in our two front rooms. We are starting to get together folders with more material about the displays, and we do have some resources already, including old newspapers and Rate Books.

* the Meeting Room is already being well-used. We have had a stencilling workshop, history teachers’ seminars; teachers on day release; Wollongong’s visiting delegation from Kawasaki had morning tea with us; the National Trust has had one monthly meeting and a historic buildings workshop; the Environmental Heritage committee has met there. It is, however, a bit too small. It can take 40 people at a pinch, and a few more at a squeeze, but the right size is a 49-seater room, so that it could take a standard tourist coach load. On a more domestic level, one of our Honorary Curators has set up a “Kiddies’ Corner” in it, so that small children can play there, in view of the entry desk, instead of being bored or damaging the exhibits (We did decide against having a sandheap at the front door.)

* our video equipment is clearly a winner. People don’t seem to have enough of the electronic media, and seem ready to watch anything on a screen. We are planning to have our members make short videos (about eight-minute) on local themes, and the Meeting Room may then be full all the time.

* the shop has been another important factor for us. Apart from its intrinsic use, we have a special arrangement for the shop and entry point that also ensures that the Cottage opens six days a week.

* and finally, the site and the building. Increasing public interest in old buildings and in restoration has given us a significant addition stream of visitors.

3.2 We still have days, and I understand you still do after I think 22 years - when only two or three people come in, and we wonder if it worth while. On the other hand, we have the days when great-great-grandchildren of some of the people in photographs on our walls visit us and swell with pride, and make us feel like doing so too.

4 What have we learnt so far?

4.1 We have now been open for nearly six months. We have kept to our planned opening times. We have been on target with entrance monies, and (apart from the electricity account) within our expenses budget. We are still amateurs, but are learning fast. I think there are five main things that we have learnt so far.

4.2 ** Lesson 1 is to keep the Cottage open regularly, to change displays and add new items frequently, and to encourage a wide range of activities at the Cottage to make it alive and interesting for our members and for visitors.

4.3 ** Lesson 2 is the importance of having things that people can touch or
play with, or videos that they can watch (and later, when we have the money, historical video games.) We are in competition with sophisticated media today and we have to be up with technology. A subsidiary lesson for me is that people from my own age group are often dubious of technology, so we must get younger people on to our management committees.

4.4 **Lesson 3 is to get the local community involved. Donors send all their friends and relations in to see what they have donated or to see the temporary displays. Another aspect of this is to ready to help local bodies - and especially the local

4.5 **We must keep working at our potential visitors - chasing up schools, local clubs (Probus, Rotary, etc.) tour bus and coach companies, the Australian College for Seniors, and anyone who might have access to groups that might be interested in us. Above all, I believe we should concentrate a lot of our attention on the tourist trade. This is where there is likely to be grant money, it is a source of funds, and, if we really believe that our fundamental objective is to promote widely the love of history, we should be working on the ordinary visitor to our area.

4.6 And finally, I am convinced that all of us who run museums and such places need to work together much more closely. Our area is now proliferating with these - in 1988, the Pilots Cottage at Kiama and the Museum at Albion Park Rail opened, last week-end the two Port Kembla museums were briefly open; Kiama’s Family History Centre will open next month; we nearly had a tourist mine, and so on. We are not in competition with each other. We can feed off each other. We can perhaps share specialist staff that none of us individually can afford. I commend to you a 1983 publication called “Heritage and Tourism Study” from our regional Environmental Heritage Committee which suggests the development of a “heritage trail” in the Illawarra, on which our museums would be the main points. I am sure that continuing success depends on us co-operating with each other and learning from each other.

MOUNTAIN ROADS

The Dapto Pass

We learn from Mr. Carl Weber (an unquestionable authority on the subject) that he has discovered a line up the Bong Bong Mountain from Dapto by which a road equal to the Bulli Pass could be constructed. Mr Weber was employed by the Central Illawarra Council recently to ascertain whether it was possible to obtain a better route between Dapto and the tablelands than that known as the Bong Bong or Berrima Track. By spending about a fortnight in making surveys of the locality, that gentleman discovered that a road, with a grade not exceeding 1 in 8, would be made from the bottom to the top of the mountain. That is exactly the grade of the Bulli Pass, but Mr. Weber states that the Dapto Pass, constructed according to his survey, would be a much better road, as it would include more steps or flats than the Bulli one. The Central Illawarra Council has done a good work by gaining this important information, as hitherto the general impression was that it would be impossible to make much more than a goat-track up the mountain face where referred to. Now, however, the question is settled that even a better road than the celebrated Bulli Pass can be made there. The route selected by Mr. Weber, after a careful exploration of the country, includes zig-zagging, but the whole of that necessary kind of work would not lengthen the distance from top to bottom of the mountain more than five chains per mile - a mere nothing