"we slept by turns till ten o'clock [off the entrance to Lake Illawarra], and the moon being then risen, - the weather calm, - and water smooth, we pulled out towards Saddle Point; not a little pleased to have escaped so well. Perhaps we were considerably indebted, for the fear they [the natives] entertained of us, to an old red waistcoat which Mr. Bass wore, and from which they took us to be soldiers, whom the natives are particularly afraid of; and though we did not much admire our new name "Soja" [soldier], yet thought it best not to undeceive them" (ibid., p.13)

It is a sad thought that as early as 1796 the Illawarra Aborigines had come to fear whitemen, especially soldiers. Flinders noted "the extreme fear they seemed to be under of our harmless [wet] fire-arms" (ibid., p.13), and today we can only guess at what had provoked this fear. We should also consider that if white people were amongst the local Aborigines at such an early point, then the decimating effects of European diseases such as smallpox etc., would already have started to take effect, and not have been introduced after 1815, when white settlement in Illawarra became widespread, as is generally considered.

The Botany Bay native Dilba, who was so friendly in piloting Bass and Flinders to Lake Illawarra and supplying them with water and fish, was later accused of killing 2 members of the crew of the Sydney Cove wreck who passed through Illawarra in April-May 1797. He was eventually pursued by a party led by George Bass, but escaped being shot.

Matthew Flinders’ manuscript journal of the cruise of the Tom Thumb to Illawarra in 1796 contains a lot more information of historical significance than merely the amusing account of the shaving of aboriginal beards by the shores of Lake Illawarra for which it is popularly remembered. Its depiction of the local Aborigines as hostile is so unlike later accounts which almost invariably point out how friendly the Illawarra blacks were in comparison to those from other regions of New South Wales.

Michael Organ

ILLAWARRA'S FIRST WHITE SETTLERS

1796

WAS THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY IN THE ILLAWARRA?

According to Bill Bayley in his Blue Haven (p.22) "the eminent scientist professor [Huxley - the popularizer of Darwin's Origin of Species] visited the place [Woodstock Mill near Jamberoo] and married Heathorne's daughter Henrietta in 1847."

This would appear to be untrue. After years of research I've been unable to uncover the slightest piece of evidence to substantiate Mr. Bayley’s argument.

Huxley married Henrietta Heathorne after whirling her around the dance-floor at one of Sydney’s more elite social occasions. Bayley’s suggestion that Huxley was in the Illawarra probably stems from a number of things - wishful thinking, sexism and a fondness for the 'great man' school of historiography.

Henrietta Heathorne, however, was a most interesting woman in her own right and has left us with a vivid record of a journey to the Illawarra in 1843-1844. In 1912 she published her reminiscences of the Illawarra in the English Cornhill Magazine. As far as I am aware, they have never been republished in full since
that time. As a tribute to Henrietta and as an attempt to reflect back some of 
the limelight Bill Bayley took away from her, the forthcoming issues of the Bulletin 
will reprint the ten pages of her reminiscences.

Joseph Davis

PICTURES OF AUSTRALIAN LIFE 1843-1844
BY HENRIETTA HEATHORNE (MRS THOMAS HENRY HUXLEY)

Shortly before Christmas 1843, my mother, my half-sister, and myself arrived
at Sydney, New South Wales, in one of Messrs. Green's ships, the Ellenborough,
after a voyage of four and a-half months. Think of it, ye steam-wafted passengers
of 1911!

The sail up the harbour was a revelation of beauty. Its fairy-like bays, their
low-lying shores sloping to the water's edge, that allured us to explore them, the
glorious golden sunshine, the bluest of skies reflected in another heaven in the
transparent sea, made up a scene of enchanting beauty beyond all I had ever
imagined of loveliness.

My father met us on landing, and at once took us to his friends, Mr. Sea,
manager of the Union Bank, Sydney, and his sister, who received us with Colonial
warmth. But our Christmas was spent with other English friends of my father's,
the Kirkes, who lived on the North Shore, in a picturesque house at the head of
one of the harbour's innumerable little bays.

The Kirkes, a delightful elderly couple, had a grown-up family of sons and
daughters - frank, warm-hearted, and genial - who, it being holiday-time, were all
gathered together in the parent home.

The morning after our arrival I was taken, at 5 a.m., by two of the girls to the
bathing-place, a retired and lonely cove, surrounded by yellow-flowering wattles
and myrtles with glistening sheen of dark-green leaves. This kind of myrtle showed
flower and fruit at the same time. The latter consisted of white wax-like oval
berries, with patches of rich red upon them, growing side by side with the delicate
white sprays of blossom.

Never before had I seen such beautiful trees, such brilliant sunshine and sapphire
sea - so clear the, at thirty feet below, the bed of white sand was visible.

The sharks that infested the harbour did not come up as far as this spot, so
in safety we girls disported in the warm rippling waters that broke into thousands
of diamond-points under the great light of an Australian summer. Stepping out
of the water we were almost instantly dried by the hot sunshine, even at that
early hour. What a paradise seemed this new land to me, long penned up in London
streets! Mentally I floated in a heaven of delight.

By nine o'clock the heat was so intense that we girls assembles in a large,
uncarpeted room, whose windows to the ground were darkened by closed venetian
blinds. Putting on cool white dressing-gowns, we lay about, by preference on the
bare floor, and talked and laughed as only girlhood, light-hearted and irresponsible,
can do.

On Christmas Day the heat became insufferable, for a hot wind flew - a brick-
fielder, so called because the wind passed over certain old brickfields, filling every
house with fine red dust in spite of closed windows. Well-soaked blankets were
hung up against the venetian blinds inside the spacious verandah: the evaporation
from them somewhat helped to cool the baked air.