Illawarra Historical Society featured strongly in this period with exhibitions on the industrial heritage of the region.

In the Wollongong area the Committee has been working in close co-operation with a heritage study team of consultants. This group, funded by the City Council and by a grant obtained by the Committee from the Heritage Council is undertaking a detailed inventory and description of all major heritage components of the Wollongong built environment. This survey includes the commercial, rural and residential areas of the city. The report will be finalised mid 1990.

The retention and restoration of the Bulli Railway Station (1887) was a significant project in northern Illawarra. The issue required gaining the support of the State Rail Authority which traditionally did not encourage the retention of such railway structures. The station now restored forms a valuable part of the Bulli landscape.

In the Shellharbour district the committee has been involved in the ongoing revitalisation of Shellharbour township. This project involves the restoration of key heritage buildings through the enhancement of surrounding buildings through the use of appropriate colour schemes, signage, and facade decoration.

Within the Kiama area the development of a list of buildings for inclusion and protection in the Local Environment Plan has been an important task for the committee. The list prepared in co-operation with the local Nation Trust and Historical Society identified significant heritage precincts within each of the Kiama township i.e. groups or street blocks of heritage buildings, as well as important historical sites, natural landscapes, and prominent and significant trees.

Steve Dillon

AUCTION OF MENZIES PAPERS

On 24 March an auction was held at Jamberoo Municipal Hall in which a number of historically significant letters, documents, books, etc., associated with the Menzies - Tindell - Thompson families of Jamberoo were offered for sale. Some of the letters dated from 1822 and much of the material was related to Dr. Robert and Margaret Menzies who arrived in Illawarra in 1839 and built Minamurra House between 1840-43.

Such an important collection of papers ideally should have been presented to the National or Mitchell Library. Unfortunately they were offered for sale and the collection is now dispersed throughout the state. Many major items were brought by a Sydney collector with no ties to the family or Illawarra.

The IHS and Wollongong University Archives were represented at the auction, however the prices realised - with the total collection selling for about $2000 and individual letters going for up to $350 - meant that we were unsuccessful in our attempt to secure the material and keep it in Illawarra.

Luckily some of the successful purchasers, such as Elsie Stewart and Nicholas Dettman (former, and current owner of Minamurra House) hope to eventually donate their material to the National Library, and others have agreed to supply copies to the IHS.

However the point remains that, like the destruction of an old building, the dispersal of such a significant collection of papers is to be deeply regretted. A monetary value should never be placed on such material for, being unique, it is irreplaceable and therefore priceless.
Hopefully in the future the Society may see the donation of such material to its collection, as it cannot compete in the open market and at auctions due to limited funds.

Michael Organ

SHOPPING EARLY THIS CENTURY

The present generation, accustomed to doing the household shopping in giant supermarkets, would probably view with disbelief an account of methods and practices employed in their parents’ and grandparents time.

As a typical example I could take my boyhood home at Albion Park between the years 1910-1925 when we lived in a large house on a ten acre property on the outskirts of the village.

Counting a live-in help we were a large household of ten and the equivalent of many farm establishments in the district.

Many groceries were bought in bulk and behind the door in our pantry hung a side of Hutton’s bacon from which each morning was cut sufficient rashers for the usual bacon and egg breakfast; this was the real bacon, cured in a smoke house and in no way like the modern chemical cured product which has a life, even in a refrigerator, of a few days. A side would last for many weeks and in addition to rashers would provide a ham and many boiling pieces.

Then there would be a seventy pound bag of sugar, a fifty pound bag of Brunton’s flour, a ten pound bag of rolled oats, a four gallon tin of lighting kerosene, bars of Early Morn or Sunlight soaps, packets of candles, starch and Reckitts Blue, a gallon jar of vinegar and on the shelves scores of jars of home made preserves and jam, always a seven pound tin of golden syrup, black treacle and honey.

Jam making was an ongoing operation with, according to the season, a large pan of blackberries, peaches, apricots, plums, quinces, cape gooseberries or jam melon usually on the stove.

Tea usually came from the tea houses of Inglis, Griffith, or Edwards in Sydney in fourteen or twenty eight pound “chest” and whose saler-man paid regular calls booking fresh orders.

In a kitchen cupboard was stored Zebra stove polish for the fuel stove, Brunswick Black for the six open-fire grates, Shinoleum floor polish, Bon-Ton liquid polish for patent leather footwear and cakes of black boot polish which had to be mixed with water. Woe betide the schoolboy whose boots did not pass muster for polish at morning assembly.

The property supported one sulky horse - I am not referring to his temper - and two house cows, always one in milk and the other “resting and expecting”; naturally there was always a large surplus of milk and this was put to “set” in large shallow dishes. The cream rose to the surface and after a couple of days was skimmed off into a large bowl and churned into butter by use of an egg beater. This was an after school job which we hated.

The resultant skim milk, curdled and thick, helped fatten a pig kept in a sty remote from the house. At maturity it would be butchered by an elderly neighbour, Lionel Hurry, and for a few days we dined on fresh pork and the rest would be divided up into boiling pieces, massaged with coarse salt and allspice and stacked in a keg of brine pickle to periodically emerge as salt pork. A replacement piglet took its place in the sty.