RECOLLECTIONS OF NORTHERN ILLAWARRA DURING WORLD WAR 1
BY AN OCTOGENARIAN WHO WAS A BOY THERE THEN
(continued from October Bulletin)

FURNITURE
Furniture, in the ordinary home was necessarily simple, even Spartan. Wealthy homes were in a class apart and probably possessed solid, expensive furniture hand-made by a cabinet maker. But most people were not wealthy.

Red cedar was still commonly found in furniture; it is now rare and expensive, collectors' items.

A dining-room suite might consist of a light oak table and matching sideboard and chairs, which might have a padded leather seat, with the whole suite French polished. A less expensive set might have odd chairs with woven cane seats and light wooden frames called Austrian chairs. Some forms of sofas or couches were available.

Bedroom suites could have wooden or metal beds, the latter often decorated with brass knobs and other parts. Four posters had disappeared by now. There could be a wardrobe, dressing table and perhaps a wash-stand, all matching. The wash-stand disappeared when the modern bathroom with bath, shower and washbasin was introduced.

A kitchen table was usually of plain white pine, scrubbed scrupulously clean. They could be, alternatively, covered with linoleum or have an oilcloth tablecloth. There was no laminated plastic for table tops and work bench tops then. The kitchen dresser was a common article of furniture. The kitchen cabinet with leadlight doors came some years later, and now we have built-in cupboards.

In those days I never encountered metal-framed furniture, whether tubular metal or angular metal, apart from the beds.

DRESS
Clothes and fashions were basically the same as today, but today I believe they are lighter, more hygienic, and cooler in summer. However, in those days, hats were worn by practically everyone, men, women, boys and girls. The most likely to go bareheaded were the boys. For men to go without a hat it would attract more attention than to wear a hat today. Girls and women wore wide floppy hats, which was a good thing really, for avoiding skin cancer in later life. Men wore mainly felt hats, but panama hats were freely worn in summer. Straw boaters and bowlers were on the way out. I remember one man at Thirroul who wore a white pith helmet, a round one, in the heat of summer, and it certainly looked light and cool. In Sydney I saw an odd top hat and morning coat (a long coat nearly to the knees) worn by older men in the street, the last of their kind. Boys' hats were of the soft, floppy, rag variety, though some wore felt hats, and many wore cloth caps.

Men's coats were fairly long, half way down the thigh, and they usually wore a waistcoat, sometimes called a vest. A man's suit might be all matching or all odd. The trousers were cut narrow. Men never wore shorts as today. In fact when an eccentric named Chidley wore shorts round the streets of Sydney, he was laughed at as a madman. Men, except workmen, rarely went out without a coat. Men, too, were condemned to wear stiff starched collars with a necktie. The day
of the sensible and merciful soft collar had not yet arrived but was not far off. Men often wore a coloured shirt and white collar, a fashion being revived two generations later. Men and boys wore boots, but shoes were soon to become acceptable, after the War. In summer men sometimes wore suits of white drill or tussore silk, which was a cream colour; or they wore light-weight coats, without padded shoulders, made of alpaca, shiny black or grey. Workmen wore grey flannel shirts with elbow length sleeves and no collar; they wore heavy drill trousers and blucher boots, often without socks. They commonly used bowyangs. Braces were usual but some belts were seen too. Workmen did not wear coats, except in rain, but frequently had a waistcoat, the pockets of which were handy for stowing their smoking material.

Boys wore short pants, but these usually extended to the knee or even a little lower. Boys of richer parents wore knickerbockers. Boys, too, wore braces. They wore normal shirts and often a coat (jacket). Woollen jerseys were worn, but I do not remember them being called pull-overs, a very descriptive term. Boots were heavy and clumsy, and it was to be a few years before thin shoes became available. Boys wore long socks, with or without a patterned top. Despite all this, they often went barefooted, either by choice or because the families were poor. When we were boys underpants were not generally worn and the pants had to be washed. I seem to remember men having plain cotton underpants. Long woollen underwear (long Johns) were worn by both men and boys, also women and girls, for those who could afford them. Later, with mass production, a wide range of styles, sizes and weaves made universal use possible and the change-daily practice began.

Women's skirts were long, not far above the ankle. They had dresses or separate blouse and skirt with belt, sometimes metal, sometimes patent leather. Sometimes they wore what was then called a costume but would now probably be called a suit: a matching coat and skirt, with separate blouse, and in the fashion of the time the coat long, nearly to the knees. Corsets or stays were almost mandatory, with whalebone perpendicular strips at intervals and tightly laced at the back: they must have been a most uncomfortable means of self-torture. Petticoats were worn: they are called slips now, I think. Petticoats were full, flounced and decorated with lace or embroidery, out of sight, wasting their sweetness. Underclothes were fuller and longer, a far cry from the present-day minimal sizes. Shoes and stockings completed the outfit. Shoes had medium height heels and stockings were likely to be wool or cashmere, for silk stockings I think came later. Pants were sometimes called drawers, sometimes bloomers.

Girls' skirts were relatively long, about halfway down the calf, and were full of frills and flounces. The dresses had long sleeves or three-quarter length, and large collars. White was favoured. Socks or stockings and rather heavy shoes were worn.

Women and girls never wore slacks, and the modern jeans as worn by both sexes, old and young, were unknown, though they were sometimes referred to in literature as having been worn by seamen and others. The material denim was known.

Leather sandals and rubber-soled sandshoes were worn, but thongs, joggers, desert boots and other forms of modern footwear were unknown.
Swimwear was entirely different from today. Neck to knee was the rule, and people of those days would be horrified at today's briefs and bikinis. Both men's and women's swimming costumes were most often two-piece, the top separate but long and overlapping the pants. They had short sleeves, not the present day shoulder straps; and the pants, extending to just above the knees, were supported by a tape round the top and tied in front. Women wore a loose-fitting bathing-cap, to accommodate their long hair; it was waterproof and held in place by an elastic band. Women's and girls' hair was left long, though fringes (hair cut across the forehead) I seem to remember. It was the post-War period before the hair was cut into various styles called the bob, the shingle or the Eton cut.

Everyone literally wore Sunday best to church. Women always wore hat and gloves. It would have been unthinkable to go to church with head uncovered. With present day enlightenment and relaxation, cool light, sensible, even casual, clothing are tolerated in both sexes by both church authorities and congregations. Hats may be discarded by women, collars and ties by men, and so on.

Women's make-up was not as elaborate then; there was not the same range of cosmetics. Nor was it as socially acceptable. In those days most women used no make-up whatever. When face powder came to be used it was applied with a powder-puff, a soft, feathery brush-like thing with a little handle. Now they use a little pad. Colour for the cheeks was at first frowned on; painted women were regarded as cheap, and indeed some women and girls used it to advertise themselves. It was at first called paint, not rouge. There was a rhyme:- Powder and paint, powder and paint, Make girls look what they ain't. I do not know when lipstick began to be used.

SPORT

In summer cricket was played by the men, and in winter two codes of football, soccer and Rugby league. As boys we of course had our heroes, some of whose names I still remember. At school I had my first experience of both cricket and rugby league, experience at a very elementary level, but we were learning the rules and the value of team games. It laid the foundation for better things later and proved an asset in life.

All the games, both the adult ones we watched and the schoolboy ones in which we took part, were played on the sports ground near the Thirroul station, called the recreation ground and commonly called "The Rec". We also held school races there.

Tennis was played a little by the grown-ups, but I cannot recall any public courts at the time. There was no basketball or netball for the girls.

There was a small surf club and a few lifesavers on duty at the beach in summer time. They practised surf rescue drill with the reel and resuscitation by the then current method, the Schafer method, now superseded by mouth-to-mouth.

The modern pastimes of scuba diving and spear fishing were unheard of.

As would be expected in a seaside resort, most of the children could swim, some very well. At Thirroul we had the creek and its swimming hole by the beach, the lagoon on the beach when full, and also, but less useful than the still water for beginners, the surf. I seem to remember rock baths at Austinmer, but then again my memory may be astray.
ROAD TRANSPORT

Most road vehicles at the time were horse drawn, but we were just at the beginning of the transition stage between horse and motor vehicle. There were sulkies, buggies, carriages, spring carts, tip drays wagons, wagonettes, and specialty carts for bakers, milkmen and others. Thus coach-builders and steelwrights were valued tradesmen, the demand for whom has now almost disappeared.

Motor cars were very primitive by modern standards. They were few in number and low in power. The T-model Ford was about then, and I have heard of one of these being backed up a steep hill in reverse gear, because reverse had a lower gear ratio even than low gear. The T-model had no gear box and only two forward gears, low and top, plus reverse. Punctures were a common occurrence and had to be repaired at the road-side, the tyre removed with tyre levers and the inner tube repaired with a patching outfit. Side curtains came later; it was fifteen years before the completely enclosed sedan body was to appear.

Heavy motor vehicles also developed slowly. An early bus service was operated by Mr. Mant, I think of Bulli, through Thirroul to Wollongong. I do not know where it started from, but it was somewhere further north (Scarborough, Coledale, Austinmer?). It was a slow, lumbering vehicle, with steps at the back to enter by and seats down each side facing one another. It had a wooden roof supported by iron uprights, but no sides. It probably had canvas blinds at sides and back to roll up or down according to the weather. Another one or two passengers could sit in front alongside the driver.

Thirroul had a hire car, but I cannot remember ever hearing it called a taxi.

An unusual motor vehicle seen about Thirroul was the motor buggy. Instead of rubber tyres it had large iron-tyred wheels like sulky wheels.

There were a few motor bikes about. I can remember a Harley-Davidson motor bike and sidecar outfit, and a small red-painted Indian Scout.

THE SOUTH COAST ROAD

People who know the road from Bulli to Wollongong as it now exists would never imagine what it was like in 1915-1920. Tar-sealed, crowded with light and heavy vehicles, pedestrians, completely built out now, it is difficult for those who knew it then to think back and recall what it was really like: a quiet, dusty, metalled or gravel road through a mainly rural countryside.

Two level crossings have been eliminated between Stanwell Park and Wollongong: one at Thirroul and one at North Wollongong. From Stanwell Park the road followed a route on the eastern or seaward side of the railway. Then just north of Thirroul station it turned west and crossed the line by a level-crossing. About the time I first went to Thirroul as a boy this crossing was eliminated by building an overbridge at a cutting a short distance further north. This meant realignment of the road approaching the bridge on the east and entering the shopping area past the Hall on the west. Past the shops it turned left at right angles and continued southwards to Bulli.

From Thirroul the road remained on the western side of the railway (as it still does) till it came to Mt. Pleasant where it recrossed the line by an oblique level-crossing just north of the then new North Wollongong station. From the level-crossing the road continued past a familiar landmark of the day, Bode's Hotel.
(pronounced boh-dee), then up the gradual climb up Flinders St. to Keira St. Then some time after I left the district, the level-crossing was replaced by the present overpass a little further north than the level-crossing. As the land there was level, it necessitated high approach embankments from each side of the railway before the bridge could be built. This also meant that the road had to be realigned.

Looking westward from North Wollongong station in 1920 the land was almost all open paddocks, probably dairy farms. The Mt. Ousley Road had not even been considered, nor had the important education complex there today.

THE RAILWAY

To attend high-school at Wollongong children travelled by train from points north as far as Scarborough and the then new station, Wombarra. I travelled from Thirroul and got out at North Wollongong, a journey of about seven miles. From there we walked to the old high school, which was situated near the top of a hill at North Wollongong called, if my memory is correct, Smith's Hill.

We caught a train at Thirroul at about 8.15 in the morning, a miners’ train hauled by a bunker-type saddle-tank locomotive. The carriages were short, old-fashioned and rough. The seats were unpadded, just the bare boards, because miners returning home, all black except for the whites of the eyes, would spread coal-dust on the cushions. On the return journey we caught the afternoon passenger train to Sydney hauled by the bigger P-class loco. The carriages were well sprung, smooth riding, and had cushioned seats. Travel by train was free.

The stations on the Thirroul-Wollongong run have changed. They used to be:

- Thirroul, Bulli, Woonona (opened about the end of the War), Bellambi, Corrimal, Balgownie, North Wollongong, Wollongong. There was no Towradgi (we called it Tow-rod-gee) or Fairy Meadow. Now there is no Balgownie, or rather it has been changed to Fairy Meadow.

When I first went to Thirroul there was only the one platform, on the seaward side of the single track, but while I was there they built a new western platform with brick station building and an overbridge for people to cross the line.

Bulli station, too, was single-platform on the seaward side, but has since my time been duplicated and expanded.

Woonona station opened about the end of the First War and began as a short platform built of slabs like old railway sleepers on the western side of the line. It seemed strange that though Woonona was a more important business town, Bulli had the first and bigger station.

Bellambi use to be an island platform, but I do not know what it is now.

In 1920 one could look from where Woonona station now stands across flat open paddocks to the sea and the long Bellambi jetty, paddocks thickly dotted with cabbage palms. One of the greatest surprises of my life was to find, on visiting the Illawarra after an absence of thirty years, that cabbage palms had almost disappeared.

In the First War period the railway line had been duplicated from Scarborough (that is from the single-track Clifton or Scarborough tunnel) as far as the Bulli Jetty coal-line crossing between Thirroul and Bulli, where our trains used to clatter across the other line, clack-clack clack-clack, clack-clack clack-clack. There was a signal box there and the engine crew had to change staffs with the signalman.
before entering the single-line section to North Wollongong. I can remember one occasion when the staff was dropped and the train had to jerk to a stop while the fireman climbed down from the cab to retrieve the staff before we could proceed.

There were several of these clattery crossings on the way to Wollongong. I remember those at Bellambi, Corrimal, Mt. Pleasant and Mt. Keira (between North Wollongong and Wollongong). I think these cross railways were privately owned by the collieries which were to be seen at intervals along the foothills of the Illawarra Range. They were tunnel mines, not shaft mines, and bored straight into the coal seams in the escarpment. The coal lines ran from west to east across the government line, which ran north and south. They led to various jetties along the coast to load colliers, two of which I clearly recall: Bulli Jetty at the extreme southern end of Thirroul beach, at Bulli Point; and the Bellambi Jetty, which I seem to remember being longer than Bulli Jetty but not as sturdily built. The jetties fell into disuse when the railways began to take the coal to Sydney, but they were very active in my boyhood days. I have a faint recollection of a jetty at Coalcliff, destroyed by storms at sea.

Another memory I have was of a series of neat curved brick overhead bridges between Austinmer and Woonona. They were a pleasant contrast with the then typical wooden overbridges of either round or sawn timber, strongly made, but victims of fire and termites.

A not so pleasant memory was the old Otford tunnel. This was a nightmare to engine drivers and firemen, and to a much lesser extent to train travellers. Travelling north from Stanwell Park station, there was a steep climb up to and through the tunnel to Otford on the northern side of the Bald Hill ridge (Bulgo Range?). It was a slow, hot, smoky grind up the grade, and being a single-line tunnel the smoke, steam and fumes did not disperse as readily as in double-track tunnels. Train crews have been known to pass out during heat waves or when southerly winds have blown the smoke forwards. By relocating Stanwell Park station higher up and to the west, the new line follows round the curve of the basin through a series of short double-line tunnels and viaducts on a much easier grade. Coming south through the old tunnel was nothing like going north up the grade. One of my most vivid childhood memories was on my first train journey from Sydney to Thirroul when we emerged from old Otford tunnel to the glorious view of the blue Pacific on a bright, clear, sunny day.

During the War a serious railway strike took place. A few railwaymen continued to work, called loyalists by the conservative members of the public, scabs by unionists. One serious incident happened right on our own doorstep when a night passenger train was being driven south near Coledale: a member of the crew, I think the fireman, was shot and wounded. My memory is too hazy to give details either of this incident or of the strike in general.

Another railway item of interest was the thrill to us boys of seeing the first of the engines with big wheels in the Thirroul railway yards. This was the new NN class loco, given the obvious nickname the Nanny by railwaymen and reclassified as the C35 class later. We called it the high-flier and what a marvellous sight it was. We almost worshipped it. One of the class was soon to be painted a bright blue to pull the royal train during the visit in 1920 of the Prince of Wales, later the
Duke of Windsor. ‘Later we often saw this blue engine in general service for some years after the royal visit.

THE WAR

During the 1914-1918 War, because life appeared to be proceeding normally, it might have been presumed that the war did not affect us. But it did. Even the children felt vaguely disturbed all the time. We were conscious of the seriousness of the struggle, especially in the dark days of 1917 and early 1918. Though the war was thousands of miles away, we knew our future depended on the outcome. And the adults must have been very much more worried beneath the surface.

The War of 1914-18 was at first spoken of as the Great War, but when about twenty years later the 1939-1945 War broke out they came to be referred to as the First World War and the Second World War, or as World War I and World War II, the latter I have reason to believe being an apt invention of the Americans.

It must be remembered that during the First War there was no wireless and radio news, let alone television with its powerful visual impact. War news came by cable and was printed in the newspapers the next day. Wireless telegraphy, or wireless, was in its infancy and crackly morse was used for war purposes, such as ships at sea. The daily papers reported progress of the fighting and printed daily lists of war casualties: Killed in action, died of wounds, wounded in action, died of illness, missing, etc. Apart from the private family sorrow these lists brought, they kept the rest of us aware of the price being paid.

The Gallipoli campaign of 1915 with its long casualty lists shocked and saddened the nation. What a colossal wastage of young life! We were proud of the heroism of the Anzacs and this tended to blind us to what a monumental blunder had been committed and its dismal failure, relieved only by the success of the skilled evacuation.

Meantime the main theatre of war was the Western Front. We learnt that this name was used to describe the war in western Europe (which mainly meant Belgium and France) to distinguish it from the war in eastern Europe, the Eastern Front, where Germany was fighting the Russians, then one of our allies. The Eastern Front collapsed with the Russian Revolution of 1917, which allowed the Germans to concentrate on the Western Front. We youngsters were watching history being made. The papers printed maps daily showing the advances and retreats of each side on the Western Front, the salients (bulges in the line), and described the bitter fighting for French villages, hills, roads, rivers, and big towns; the long periods of static trench warfare when the newspapers had nothing more to report day after day than: All quiet on the Western Front. (These words were adopted by Remarque as the title of his powerfully descriptive novel.) Reports came through of the bitter cold of the winters, the harsh frosts, the frozen countryside, the ice and slush round the feet of the soldiers in the trenches, and of the misery and privation that led to illness and death; of the barbed wire entanglements in front of the trenches of each side, and the shell-holed strip between the trenches called No Man’s Land; of the almost ceaseless artillery bombardments and whine of shells overhead; of the attacks and counter-attacks. It all added up to a kind of suppressed horror which even the children absorbed.

The U.S.A. was committed to a policy of neutrality in foreign wars, but the
sinking of the Lusitania by a German submarine hardened American opinion. Much to Allied satisfaction America eventually declared war on Germany in April 1917, but it was some time before their armies could be placed in the field in France. When their troops, nicknamed doughboys, at last arrived, they helped swing the balance against Germany, who surrendered on 11-11-1918 after 4½ years of intense struggle, Armistice Day, the eleventh hour of the eleventh day of the eleventh month.

In the last few months of 1918 when it became obvious to all that the Germans were being overpowered, rumours and false alarms that the war had ended were widespread, and when the end really came people were sceptical and wary. At last we were all convinced and the whole country went mad. The good news came through in the early evening and pandemonium followed. Mine whistles blew, railway engine whistles cock-a-doodle-doo’d interminably, people took to the streets shouting, cheering, singing, beating pots and pans, dishes, kerosene tins; flags were waved and impromptu processions formed. The town bandsmen, suddenly summoned, began playing. What excitement! There were even tears of joy!

I have a faint recollection of sports, or a picnic, or something similar being arranged for the children, but am uncertain. I am sure that the government had peace medals struck and these were presented to all school children after the resumption in 1919 - round, silver-coloured medals, suspended by a piece of red, white and blue ribbon and supplied with a small safety-pin.

During the war patriotic songs were sung. Here are the titles of some of the songs of the period:- Keep the Home Fires Burning; There’s a Long, Long Trail A-Winding; There’s a Rose that Grows in No-Man’s Land; Boys of the Dardanelles; It’s a Long Way to Tipperary; Mademoiselle from Armentieres; Pack Up Your Toubles in Your Old Kit Bag; Till we Meet Again. The National Anthem was God Save the King, not Queen, as King George V was on the throne, though it was not long before that it was God Save the Queen, for Queen Victoria (1901). Advance Australia Fair was taught in the schools, but not as the national anthem.

I have many other random memories of the wartime. One is the cynical, even resentful attitude we all had to be alleged American claim, We won the war. The Allies had fought bitterly for nearly three years before the Americans committed themselves, and then longer before they began fighting. We were even further disillusioned when the U.S. president, President Wilson, who was instrumental in having the League of Nations formed (the forerunner of the United Nations Organisation), eventually acquiesced in America not becoming a member.

We did not understand politics very much then, but during the two conscription referendums we realised that controversy, even bitterness, existed, and gathered that most people were glad that a volunteer Australian army was preferable to a conscripted one.

We heard about, but did not understand much about, a body called the I.W.W. They called themselves the Industrial Workers of the World, but were dubbed I Won’t Work. We gathered that they were disloyal, a disruptive influence, and frowned upon by most people.

An interesting feature of the early years were the recruiting marches from various country centres along the main roads leading to Sydney. Bands of volunteers...
marched towards the city, picking up new recruits along the route. The various groups adopted different names and I think the South Coast group were called the Waratahs. I do not have access to Dr. C. E. W. Bean’s history to check this. At any rate, I have a clear memory of a small groups, perhaps twenty or so, marching off cheerfully in the direction of Austinmer, all in step, but they probably marched at-ease as they progressed.

Another memory I have, probably connected with the war, was of a stockpile of coal near the Bulli jetty. I assume it was a wartime precaution against coal shortage, for coal was essential for ships, trains, factories, gasworks, cokeworks and others. The dump consisted of long parallel rows of neatly stacked coal, with grassed spaces between the rows. The rows were arranged obliquely, branching off from the Bulli jetty coal-line and ending at the edge of the beach where grass became sand. At a guess and allowing for hazy childhood memories, I would say the rows were 15-20 feet wide, 8ft. high, and perhaps 100yds. long. That land was all vacant then, between McCauley’s Hill and Bulli jetty.

I have a very vivid recollection of the first aeroplane most of us had seen. It was flown from Sydney by Harold Hawker, a well known Australian aviator of the day. He flew over Wollongong on a lovely clear day in 1919, flying the typical light biplane of the time, like a Tiger Moth. I have since learnt that Harold was killed at Hendon, England, in a plane crash in 1921.

Important names I recall:- Field Marshal Lord Kitchener, England (drowned when British cruiser mined); Field Marshal Sir Douglas (later Earl) Haig, British; Generalissimo Foch, French, elected Allied commander-in-chief; Gen. Pershing, U.S.; Admiral Sir John (later Earl) Jellicoe, British, later Gov.-Gen. New Zealand; Admiral Sir David (later Earl) Beatty; (Mr) Lloyd George, P.M., U.K.; William Morris (Billy) Hughes, P.M. Aust.; Gen. Monash, Aust.; Kaiser Wilhelm 11, Emperor, Germany; His son, Wilhelm (Little Willy); Field Marshal von Hindenburg Germany, later President.

THIRRROUL PRIMARY SCHOOL

Thirroul school was well situated (probably still is) in the foot-hills of the Illawarra Range, overlooking the town and with a wonderful view of the sea. The steep cliffs of the escarpment provided a backdrop. Parts of the playground were pleasantly shaded by large coral trees, which had the advantage of losing their leaves in winter thus letting the sun through. Someone with knowledge and foresight must have chosen these trees, for they are thorny and thus threaten would-be mischievous climbers with torn pants and underlying parts.

The main building consisted of one long classroom for up to four classes simultaneously, side by side, plus one single classroom for the senior class, separated from the long room by a wood and glass partition. A long corridor ran the length of this building, with the headmaster’s office at one end, near the single classroom. Those long multi-class schoolrooms made teaching and learning difficult, as voices became intermingled, and children’s attention strayed to the neighbouring class. The classroom floors rose in terraces, by steps about six inches high, so that the desks rose in tiers higher at the back than the front. The desks were the old long desks seating five or six pupils, with inkwell holes, inkwells, and pen and pencil
grooves at the front of each desk. Cast iron legs supported the desks, one at each end. The seats were long stools, the same length as the desks, and without backs. However, in some lessons it would be "seats back" and we could lean on the desk behind. Desks and stools were graded in size for the different classes. The windows were high up in the back wall and provided insufficient light for the pupils. All blackboards were on easels.

There were also extra wooden classrooms in the playground, I think two, and one weathershed. At one stage a class occupied the weathershed full time while two new classrooms were being added to the original long building. When these new rooms were finished we found that the floors were level, not tiered, and we had our first experience of dual desks and built-in wall boards. It was still in the days of white chalk on black boards and for many years afterwards. Yellow chalk on green boards were introduced because research had shown that these colours were softer on the eyes while still giving sufficient contrast. Incidentally, as the new green-coloured boards could not well be called blackboards, the name chalkboards was adopted.

Ball-point pens were not to come for many years, so steel nibs inserted into penholders (which also included the handle) were used. Ink was made from ink powder mixed with water. Inkwells had to be filled and periodically washed out, as they became choked with blotting paper fibres. The pen nibs soon rusted and had to be replaced. Mischievous children used broken pen nibs as arrowheads for paper darts which often adorned classroom ceilings. Slates and slate pencils were used in infants classes at an earlier time, but I think they were abolished by the time I am speaking of.

Looking back, I consider Thirroul was a good school with a good staff. The headmaster was C. L. Willard, who was well regarded in the service. In those days the head teacher was called the headmaster. The name principal was adopted in recent years to include women as well as men. In those days, too, the most senior teacher after the headmaster was the first assistant, first ass for short! He was more or less the same as the present deputy.

Charles L. Willard was nicknamed Chas (pronounced to rhyme with lass), I suppose after the then current custom for men to sign their names with abbreviations Chas for Charles, Jno for John, Geo for George, Wm for William, and so on.

(to be continued)