Mr Breen gave us an excellent coverage of the history of Sydney’s water supply, beginning with the Tank Stream, the first source of water for the infant colony. Problems of supply and pollution soon made it necessary to look elsewhere, so one of the first solutions was Busby’s Bore to tap the Lachlan swamps of which only the ponds at Centennial Park remain. This was a remarkable engineering feat, considering the equipment available, making its length of 12,000 feet possibly the longest tunnel in the southern hemisphere when completed in 1837.

Next came the Botany swamps scheme, begun by private enterprise, and a failed attempt to obtain suitable water from Cooks River at Tempe. This was followed by pumping from streams to the west and south of Sydney. By the turn of the century, dams were necessary. One of these, Cordeaux No.1, supplied water to Wollongong about 1902. Major dams followed: Cataract completed 1907, Cordeaux 1926, Avon 1927, Nepean 1935, Woronora 1941 and finally Warragamba.

WOLLONGONG SEEKING WATER SUPPLY 1895

The Illawarra Mercury of Saturday, August 24th, 1895 carried a lengthy article headed THE WATERWORKS QUESTION in which mention is made of a government scheme estimated at 66,000 pounds which was considered too costly for the Borough’s ratepayers. This was followed by a modified scheme costing about 33,000 pounds which had been approved by the Public Works Committee in 1892. This too had been shelved “owing to the reigning depression.”

Alderman McKenzie of the Wollongong Borough Council suggested “that water could be conveyed to Wollongong from the Cordeaux River at a much smaller cost than 30,000 pounds. Accordingly, on Thursday, August 22, “about 9.30am a party, consisting of the Mayor (Ald. Beatson), Aldermen MacCabe, McKenzie and Cochrane, Mr. C. Morton, C.E., Mr S.Edwards and local press representatives, started on horseback for the Cordeaux River.” With the aid of an aneroid they measured the height of all the hills they crossed.