

THE EARLY DAYS OF MAYFIELD.

Extracts from The Souvenir Booklet "Jubilee Celebrations"

The first residents of what is now Mayfield West were John Laurie Platt and his assigned servants. John Platt received a grant of 2000 acres on the Hunter River at Newcastle. He settled there in 1823, then becoming the first settler in this district. His homestead "Ironbark" was erected on a forty acre clearing which was planted with wheat.

On a hill, overlooking the waterfront, he erected a mill with "Dutch Arms". Platt's mill was used to grind local wheat and maize. Platt's wheat growing was unsuccessful, due to soil and climate. In 1831 when his home was burnt, his two young sons were burned to death. He built a new home at Sandgate in 1831, but by 1836 both Platt and his wife were dead. His estate was then sold to the Australian Agricultural Company. Other settlers referred to his misfortune as Platt's Folly, and for years the land from his Mill Paddock to Port Waratah was called by that name.

Charles Simpson bought 36 acres of The Folly land and built "Waratah House" naming it after the Waratah flower growing there at its most northern point. Mr. Simpson sold his property to a wealthy squatter from the New England Tableland, who cared for vineyards and an orchard here until his death in 1899.

Wine Production: During 1847, a Mr. Kitchner helped migrant vine-dressers migrate from Germany. One of these was Peter Crebert, born in Germany in 1824. He began work with Mr. James Mitchell. In 1853, he bought 5 acres of The Folly from Charles Bolton for \$13,000, and in 1855, another 5 acres for \$200.

In 1859, Crebert made the first wine produced in Newcastle, and Sunday travellers came to the Folly to buy the local products fruit, wine, butter, cheese and milk. Today our streets carry the names of many of the men who farmed these dairies, orchards and vineyards: Bullock St., Williams St., Myers St., Nogard Oakley St., Gray St., Russell St., Croese St., Crowther St., Robertson St., Crebert St., could have been their names. But which ones are you able to find?

The First Railway was from Waratah to East Maitland, built in 1857.

The Waratah Coal Mining Company built a coal line from their tunnels to the river front in 1863, and the name Port Waratah was used for the first time.

The First School at the Folly was conducted by Miss Tourle in Crebert's vineyard, but by 1874 a slab building was erected on a 2 acre block on the hill on what became the corner of Crebert and Ingall Streets. There were only 3 different Principals during the first 35 years. They were James Kilgour, John Gillette, and Donald Robertson. Opposite the school was the residence of Mr. Ingall a well-known Newcastle draper. Behind the school, with Mr. Ireland as caretaker was the Newcastle Botanical Gardens.

The First Soap Factory: When, in 1870 Mr. Crebert found he could not grow grapes successfully on his Ingall Street property, he sold to Mr. Upfold, the Managing Director of the Sydney Soap and Candle Company. This man bought another 11 acres of land, and invested about \$300,000 to build the largest and most modern soap factory in the southern hemisphere. The employees became the residents of what is now Mayfield East.

The Name Mayfield: When John Scholey, an early landowner in our district, subdivided his land for sale he named it after his daughter May. While the daughter's memory lives in this town, the pioneer father is remembered only by one of its streets. Waratah gets its name from "Waratah House" the early residence of pioneer Simpson who named it after the Waratah flower which was situated on what is now Mayfield. Waratah was originally called "Hanbury". Hanbury Street is now in Mayfield.

How B.H.P. Came Here: In 1911 the directors turned thoughts to using their South Australian ore deposits, and changing from smelters at Port Pirie to steel manufacturers. Mr. David Baser, an American iron and steel expert was invited to come and advise the directors of the B.H.P. He was enthusiastic. He had vision, and seeing beyond the swamps then below our school, selected the site for the works we see there today. He was influenced by the coal deposits nearby, and the deep water anchorage for iron-ore ships. Piles of piles nearly 50,000 of them were sunk into that swamp to make a firm base for the works, the first being driven down in 1913.

Our School: The Folly in 1870, changed to "North Waratah", the Mayfield, and finally Mayfield East. Our story tells of the origin of Platt House, and Ingall House and Crebert House. Can you find how Dangar got its name?