THE EARLY DAYS OF A FIELD.

Extracts from The Southern Bateway "Jubilee Celebrations".

The first residents of what is now Mayfield East 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 "Yonkbank" was erected on a forty acre clearing which was planted with wheat.

On a hill overlooking any water front, a 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 burnt 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 16 acres of The Folly Farm 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. E. Elton helped migrant vine-dressers: mine to Germany. One of these was Peter Cribb, born in Germany in 1822. He began work with Mr. James Mitchell in 1853, and bought 9 acres of the Folly Farm property in 1855, another 5 acres in 1858.

In 1859, Cribb made the first wine produced in Newcastle, and Sunday travellers came to the Folly to buy the local produce fruit, wine, butter, cheeses and milk. Today we streets carry the names of many of the men who farmed these dairies, orchards and vineyards: Ha. 1 St., Williams (Sts.); Wares St., Argall, Castley St., Wores St., Russell St., Cribbet St., Grother St., Robertson St., Cribbet St. could have been their names. When one is you able to find?

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

The Waratah Coal Mining Company built a Coal line from their tunnels to the river front in 1861, and the Nine Port Waratah was used for the first time.

The First School at the "Folly" was conducted by Miss Teirrie in Cribbet's vineyard, but by 1874 a club building was on what became the corner of Cribbet and Legal Streets. There were only 3 different Principals during the first 35 years. They were James Kilgour, John Gillet 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: Mr. Ingall in 1870 for Cribbet found he could not grow grapes successfully on his Legal Street property, so sold to Mr. Upfold, the Managing Director of the Sydney Soap and Candle Company. This man bought another 22 acres of land and invested about $100,000 to build the largest and most modern soap factory in the Southern Hemisphere. The employees became the residents of what's 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 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 at what is now Mayfield East. Waratah was originally called "Ilnclary, Inclary Street in now in Mayfield East.

How B.H.P. Came Here: In 1913 the directors turned thoughts to using their South Australian Co-deposit as an alternate to steel manufacturer Mr. David Hasset, an iron ore and steel expert was invited to come and advise the directors if the B.H.P. was a great expansion. He made visits and went aboard the swing, then below our school, selected in the site for the works we see today. He was influenced by the coal deposits nearby, and the deep water harbours for iron ore ships. Miles of piles nearly 50,000 of them were sunk into that almost the first being driven down in 1913.

Our School The Folly in 1877 changed to a "North Waratah", the Mayfield and early Mayfield East, our story tells of the origin of Platt House and Inclary House East. Can you find how Dangar got its name?