"Waratah and the Original Grants"

By T. A. Braye

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I account myself as happy in being permitted the privilege of speaking before your Society on the early history of Waratah, my birthplace. At the same time, I am unhappy in the fact that there are no authentic records which can be referred to earlier than 1860 which may be consulted regarding the Settlement in the area known as Waratah, and which show the reasons for a very rapid settlement of population after 1860.

What I give to-night is information garnered by me from older people as far back as 45 years ago, as I endeavoured to learn everything that I possibly could of the earliest known facts relating to the Settlement at Waratah. Most of the men from whom I obtained my information were at the time approaching 70 years. Two of them, particularly, were natives of Newcastle. How reliable that information was I cannot say, but such as I have obtained it I give it to you.

I am taking, for the purposes of this lecture, as the district of Waratah, the Municipal boundaries of Waratah. I have a plan here from which you will see the area that is known as the Municipal District of Waratah. You will observe that it starts at Port Waratah, runs along what was the old Waratah Company's railway line to the Waratah Crossing below Georgetown, and thence for a distance of about three miles to the Wallsend Coal Co.'s railway line, and then along that line to the junction with the main Northern line, and from there down on the Southern side of the main Northern line to a point about a chain from the Waratah Railway Goods Shed, and thence by a line running a distance of about 1 mile northerly to the Hunter River, and from thence along the southern bank of the river to Port Waratah, embracing an area in all of about 2,800 thousand acres, with an extreme distance from tip to tip of about four miles. Within that area of recent years many subdivisions have been made, all bearing distinctive names. Most of them are comparatively modern, as in my childhood's day we only knew the following: Waratah, North Waratah, Port Waratah, The Folly, Calcina Flat, Georgetown and The Commonage. This will probably surprise the residents of Mayfield, but it is a fact nevertheless—the Subdivision known as Mayfield in its origin about the year 1881 was a very circumscribed area, bounded on the West by Kerr Street, on the North by Crebert Street, and on the East by a line about five chains from Church Street southerly to the Maitland Road, and along the Maitland Road back to Kerr Street, in all an area of 29 acres.

As to how the district got the name "Waratah" is not very clear, but when I come to speak of Simpson's Grant, the time and circumstances under which the name arose will be detailed. The explanation given to me was that the locality which we knew as "North Waratah" was the most northerly point in Australia where the Waratah flower grew in a state of nature. Although years ago I asked many old people of my acquaintance if they had ever seen the Waratah growing there, I never met one who had, but it is not unlikely from the sandy, loamy nature of the soil to the northern side of Bull Street that somewhere about there the Waratah did grow. Botanically, it is stated that the Waratah grew from the Hunter River southward into Victoria and Tasmania, but never north of the Hunter River. Therefore, it is highly probable that North Waratah was truly the most northerly point of its growth. Of the area embraced in the district, grants of land were from time to time made by the Crown to various persons until the year 1863 the Government reserved the remaining Crown lands within the southern portion of the district from selection, and proclaimed it The Newcastle Fasturage Reserve. The reason, I believe, that actuated the then Government in this was the fact that cattle and sheep were being brought from inland for shipment to New Zealand during the Maori Wars, and as they had to wait some time for shipment, the whole of the Crown lands, not only in Waratah but in other adjoining districts, were proclaimed a Reserve, and reserved from selection, but before this proclamation at least three men had selected under the 1861 Crown Lands Act, areas right at the South-western portion of the Municipal District.

I now come to the first settler in the district, namely John Laurio Platt. There seems to be a woeful lack of authentic information concerning him, and he does not appear to have
actively interested himself in Newcastle affairs to any extent.

that there is any record of, otherwise more must have been
known of him. Probably he was too busy endeavouring to make
his large grant productive and habitable for himself and his
family, and founding a home on it. At the time my enquiries
were made, he had been dead just on 60 years, and as my in-
formants were men between 60 and 70 years of age, they could
have only been children at the time of his death, and there was
no one who had any personal recollection of him, and all that
they could tell me about him was what they had learned from
others older than themselves many years before. This much was
gathered: that he had been an Officer in the Imperial Army, a
Lieutenant of Sappers, and stationed with his Company in the
Island of Heligoland after that Island had been ceded to the
British in 1814. Possibly the reason of him being stationed
there was that the Imperial Government was then fortifying the
Island of Heligoland, which you will all remember was the Island
in the North Sea that the British Government, in 1809, obliging-
ly ceded to the German Government, and the Island which was
destined to be made by the Germans a most serious menace to
the British Sea Power during the Great War.

Later on, Platt, by arrangement with the Home Govern-
ment, came to the Coal River Settlement (otherwise Newcastle)
to take charge of the coal-mining operations then carried on
with the aid of convict labour. He arrived at Newcastle at the
latter end of 1821 or the beginning of 1822. He was promised a
grant of 2,000 acres of land, to be selected by him on the Hunter
River. He certainly was not in Newcastle at the time of his
visit to the settlement by Mr. Commissioner Bigge, otherwise
that pains-taking, exact gentleman must have mentioned the-
fact, but it is presumed that it was owing to Bigge's report or
letters to the Imperial Government as a result of his visit to
Newcastle, that the Imperial Government arranged with Platt
to come out and take charge of the working of the coalmines,
as in his report he mentions that there were "27 men employed"
in the working of the mine, and 20 tons of coal can be raised in
one day by the number of men there employed," but he goes
on to show that apparently the mining was done in a bad way,
as he speaks of the bad air and the difficulty experienced in
clearing the mine of water.

As showing further that Platt could not have been settle-
ded in the district. Bigge mentions that "in 1818 Governor Mac-
quarie gave permission to place a certain number of convicts
who had conducted themselves well in some fertile plains that
adjoin Hunter's River, and that are now called Paterson's Plains
and Wallis's Plains, to cultivate land on their account, and to
hold during the pleasure of the Government, and further, three
free persons, consisting of the storekeeper, the assistant sur-
geon, and the pilot's son, and who, with the Commandant and
the Military, formed the whole free population in the settlement
of Hunter's River, had received grants of land in these Plains.

Platt arrived in Newcastle some time at the end of 1821 or
the beginning of 1822. In the year 1822 he selected the site of
his 2,000 acre grant. Whatever his calling my have been, he
had little or no knowledge of agricultural land, otherwise he
ever would have picked upon the land which he did when
for the first time the river could have been shown to the land
by him. Let us try to visualise the land selected as it must have
presented itself to his eyes in 1822. This we are enabled to do
from the fact that portions thereof had remained untouched
for years, and quite adjacent to the portion that he first cleared,
and cultivated, and where he made his first home on the south-
eastern bank of the South Channel of the Hunter River. Immediately
behind the Mangroves fringing the River there was a small belt
of dense, tropical brush, consisting of wild native figs, black
apple trees, myrtle, cedar, and general brush growth. This is
extended along a gully running south-westerly back towards the
Maitland Road, which, of course, did not then exist. This bit
of bush land was the only good cultivatable land there—a mat-
ter of about seven or eight acres. The hilly land rising from
the River was fairly thick forest land, consisting mainly of
iron bark, some gum, and red gum. It is possible that the
thick forest land misled the inexperienced Englishman into the
belief that the land that could produce such fine timber must
necessarily be fertile—little knowing that that class of timber
was indicative of the barrenness of the whole. The South-eastern
portion of the land was covered with dense timber, another
sure indication of poor country. Other portions were swampy,
but generally the area was heavy timbered with timber of a
good class.

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We come now to the actual grant. This was dated 30th June, 1823, and was one of the earliest grants made in the Newcastle district, if not the earliest. It was made by Sir Thomas Brisbane, and rectifies that it was made in pursuance of Royal instructions of the 5th February, 1821. The grant proceeds to give and grant unto John Laurio Platt, his heirs and assigns, all those 2,000 acres of land situate lying and being in the County of Northumberland and Township of Newcastle, bounded on the east by the line bearing south, commencing from Hunter River, 88 chains on the south by a line bearing west 160 chains on the west by a line bearing north to Iron Bark to near its junction with the Hunter River (apparently the surveyors were too tired to give this distance, but approximately it is about 2½ miles), and on the north and north-east by that River.

This grant contained a peculiar reservation, and the only one, as far as I know in this district which contains such a reservation, namely a reservation of all timber required for Naval purposes. A further reservation was “such parts of the land as shall be required for a highway or highways.” A stipulation for payment of a quit rent of £2 per annum after the first five years; a condition for the employment of convicts. (So that you may follow the situation of this grant, the commencing point was a little slightly to the north-east to where the Roman Catholic Boys’ Orphanage is situated, and ran in a straight line south to the centre of Platt Street, Waratah, a distance of about 11 miles; thence it ran west 2 miles, and thence northwesterly to the junction of Iron Bark Creek (a matter of about 23 miles, and from there between to two miles along the River back to the commencing point). Commenting on the grant, it seems strange that the land was described as lying and being in the township of Newcastle. In point of fact, it was about four miles from Newcastle, with thick, trackless bush intervening, and dealing with the period, let us hear what Bigge has to say about the Township of Newcastle in 1821. He says that “the township contained altogether 13 houses, that belonged to the Government, and 71 that belonged to prisoners.”

As regards the quit rent, it was usual to reserve quit rents in grants of the period. £2 per year, however, seems very little for 2,000 acres, and even that was not to be paid for the first five years. The condition in the grant for the employment of convicts was a common one in those days in grants of large areas. Unfortunately, the records in my possession do not enable me to say the number of convicts stipulated, but it would certainly not be less than five, and possibly would be as high as 20. A great deal of misapprehension exists as to the employment of convicts by early settlers. It is a common error to suppose that they received nothing more than their keep and clothing for their work. As a matter of fact, at the date of this grant, in 1823, the regulations provided that their wages should be paid in kind. It is a common error to suppose that they were bound to find them in food which was regulated according to a scale, and pay them in the money the sum of £10 per year, reducible to £7 per year if their employers found them in clothes. The pay seems small, but if money values then and now are compared, it will be found that the £10 per year would be equivalent to about £39 per year. In other words, they received a little better than the 1½/- per week and keep.

The first portion of his grant which Platt had cleared for cultivation purposes consisted of an area of about 40 acres right in the north-eastern corner of his grant, starting from where the Roman Catholic Boys’ Orphanage is now situated, and running a distance south for nearly half a mile, and thence west about a mile. He erected his first homestead and outbuildings just to the south of the Orphanage site. Judging from the nature of the timber-growing there, the clearing must have been a slow and tedious process with the means of clearing then existing, because timber of the nature growing on the hilly portions of the land was very difficult and hard to clear. In point of fact, the clearing had originally gone down as far as where the present Maitland Road goes, but this was not all cultivated, as about a matter of 200 to 400 yards from Maitland Road was never cultivated, and later was allowed to succor and the forest to start again. Incidentally I might mention this enables me to estimate the extent of growth of the Australian hardwood timber in seventy years because to my knowledge the trees had grown up around the butts of saplings that had been cut down, and they showed in the early 90’s that the growth of iron bark, or rather the growth of iron bark that was 1” to 1½” in diameter in that period. That portion which was cultivated (and the furrows still remain there to show the cultivation) was sown with crops of maize and wheat. I might mention that the information generally as to the Platt Settlement was given to me by a Mr. Buxton, who either was born on the Estate of...
lived there as a child. The portion that was cultivated and kept cleared was known as the Mill Paddock. Mr. Buxton informed me that the reason of this was that a rough kind of a wind-mill was erected by Platt just about where the Orphanage site is now, where the maize and wheat crops were ground for food purposes. In addition to the cultivation of maize and wheat, Platt also mined for coal, the coal being loaded into barges by means of burrows, and at high tide pushed down to Newcastle. The process was done by two tunnels driven just under the Orphanage site, and the seam worked, I believe, was what is known as a floating seam of about no more than 4 ft. The two tunnels, in my young days, existed, and evidence still exists of their location. I myself, with others, have gone into these tunnels as a boy, but could not penetrate any distance owing to the falls which had occurred.

Apparently, too, there is evidence of oyster shells being removed from Black’s middens for the purpose of making lime, as a great deal of excavation in my young days existed. There is no doubt, from the records as they exist, that Platt intended to make an abiding home for himself and his descendants on his grant. His will, which he made in 1829, left his grant of 2,000 acres (which, by the way, he called “Iron Bark” due, no doubt, to the prevalence of iron bark on the property) subject to certain rights, to his wife, and certain payments to be made in respect of his younger children, to his eldest son, stating that it was his wish that his estate at Iron Bark should remain in the hands of the eldest son, subject to a valuation for him to pay such proportions as his Executors should think fit and proper towards the other boys each 2,000 acres of land. It will be noted that he mentions his other boys. There were four boys in all, the eldest of whom was Frederick William Platt, and three other boys, but on the 20th December, 1831, two of these boys were burnt to death. The following copy of a Declaration is interesting. It was made by John Butler Hewson on the 14th June, 1861, and, by the way, this John Butler Hewson was the stepfather of Mr. James Hannell, the first Mayor of Newcastle. Hewson, in his Declaration, states that he was for many years Chief Constable at Newcastle; that he knew and was well acquainted with John Laurio Platt and frequently heard him speak of Frederick William Platt as his eldest son; that he remembers two of the youngest sons of John Laurio Platt (named, as he believed, Robert Henry and John Laurie) being burnt to death in the month of December, 1831, and that he found the bodies near Iron Bark aforesaid, and that on that occasion the said John Laurio Platt particularly referred to the said Frederick William Platt as his eldest son.

Now as regards this, when I was a child I, with other boys, wandered frequently over the site of the Settlement, and on a grassy knoll in a gully leading up from the River there were four or five unmistakable mounds which we were told were graves. We had been told that they were the graves of convicts who had died on the property, but it is likely, as was common in those days, that these two boys mentioned were buried there. There never has been any question to my mind as to what these mounds were. In the last year of last century, 1899, I had a picture painted for me of the Mill Paddock, and I have that here with me now, and the location of these mounds is marked. As to how these boys were burnt to death there remains no record that I have ever been able to trace, but it is quite possible that the original homestead was burnt down, because my informant on this point told me that he never remembers the original homestead, and that the only homestead he remembered was one that was situated just at the point where in later years the road to the Ash Island punt joined the Maitland Road. Of course it was only in very later years that the punt to Ash Island was established. This old house was standing in the late 70’s, and I remember seeing it myself when a child. It was a rather roomy old place, built of sawn hardwood slabs, and roofed partly with shingles and stringy bark. Just to the left of it there had been further clearing and cultivation of an area I should say of about seven to eight acres.

John Laurio Platt died on the 17th July, 1836, leaving as his Executors Major R. C. Close, whom you will remember as being of Morpeth, and his wife, Rosanna Platt, and a Mr. F. T. V. Bloomfield. Apparently from the records, Mrs. Platt had died in his lifetime, and Bloomfield declined to act, the Will being proved by Major Close. Whatever the desires and wishes of the early settler and pioneer were with regard to his eldest son retaining the ownership of the 2,000 acres, granted to the father, the son on the 22nd October 1839, parted with the land to the Australian Agricultural Company for £6,000. Doubtless Frederick William Platt knew of much better land for agricultural pursuits.

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purposes than that which his father had selected, but as to what became of him there is no record that I know of. The only other son of John Laurio Platt was William Hampden Platt, who married one of the Brooks, of Wallsend, and it is after him that the township of Plattnburg was named, being a subdivision made by himself and wife, of his wife's portion of the Brooks' Estate.

After the A.A. Co. got possession of the property there was no attempt made by that company to settle the land or do anything with it, and it remained in the same state as left it until 1885, when the A.A. Co. determined to cut up a portion of the ground for sale, running from the Warratah Goods Shed, along Platt Street, and up to just a little beyond where the Mater Hospital is situated. This subdivision the company called Platt's Hill Estate, and sold in areas of 5 acres blocks. Later on a good deal of it was re-subdivided, and is now known as Cambridge Park. Before this, in 1856 and the early part of 1857, the Northern railway had been made through the property, but owing to the means of construction then existing there was a long hold-up at what was known for years as the Big Hill—in other words, what we now know as Platt's Hill. This occupied a considerable time in cutting, but no permanent settlement arose owing to that, as the men employed in the construction of the railway were paid off with it, and as I will mention later on, a few did remain as timber-getters in and about the district—so that a little more than 20 years after Platt's death, the main Northern railway ran through his property for a distance of nearly three miles. This railway was ultimately destined to connect up the whole of the railway system from Perth to Brisbane. Where this early pioneer and settler first caused a forest to be felled and the lands to be ploughed there are more than 1,000 people living on it, and this embraces what is known as Mayfield West, Cambridge Park and Platt's Hill. In addition, three large industrial undertakings are situated on the land, where hundreds of men are now employed—Vickers' Commonwealth Steel Products Co., the Abbatoirs, Newbold Silica Brickworks, and two big institutions, namely the Mater Misericordiae Hospital, and the Deaf and Dumb Institution—that is speaking of the living, but speaking of the dead, the Newcastle General Cemetery at Sandgate lies wholly within the area of the grant.

The next in chronological order of taking possession, but not in actual grant, is that of the 2,000 acres of the A.A. Co., but I shall not dilate upon this, more than to say that the only portion that came in the Warratah district of that grant was a matter of between 30 to 40 acres—a triangular piece right at the northward corner of the A.A. Co.'s grant.

The A.A. Co. was formed in 1824, and received a Charter entitling the company to select 1,000,000 acres of land for the purposes of agricultural, sheep and cattle farming, and in addition 2,000 acres adjoining the township of Newcastle, and the monopoly of coalmining.

Apparently the company had some dispute with Governor Darling, who seemed to have been rather a nasty type of person, and either could not read his instructions from Home, or read them in his own way, with the result that it was not until the year 1830 that the company was enabled to take possession of its grant, so that the company's grant only comes incidentally into consideration, and in point of fact the company, so far as that portion of the land lying within the Warratah boundaries, never thought it worth while considering from the stand-point of any settlement until a little over 20 years ago. Up till about that time most of my listeners will remember the corner I am speaking of, which ran along the Maitland Road, just across the Warratah side of the present coal line, and upon which a slaughter house and boiling down premises were situated, a rather unsightly sight, but with the founding of the Steel Works, and the system of Municipal rating on unimproved land, the A.A. Co. thought it advantageous to subdivide and get rid of the land, which they did.

I now come to the grantee whom I consider as being the main factor in bringing about any substantial settlement within the area, namely Thomas Grove. His grant consisted of 60 acres, the boundary of which were as follows:

Bounded on the south by High Street, on the west by Bridge Street, on the north by the centre of Platt Street (here it should be mentioned that this grant adjoined part of the southern boundary of Platt's grant), and on the east by Turton Road.

Now, at the time of the grant none of these roads existed. What was High Street on the south was known as the township reserve at Newcastle; the same with regard to the east and west...
timber-getting for the Northern Railway, and later on for the Wallsend Co.'s Railway, settled on the land somewhere in the region of Smart and Bridge Streets and depastured their bullocks and erected what were just homesteads for themselves and their families. There would not be any more than about five or six of them, some of the descendants of whom are still living in Waratah. The families as I know them were Drinkwaters, Brays, Paynes, Ellis' and Jacksons—my own people arriving there in August 1857. These first settlers continued to reside there after the railway line had passed on, and in 1859 the Newcastle-Wallsend Coal Mining Co. commenced to construct their railway line out to the Wallsend Coal Mine to connect with the Great Northern line. This gave further employment to the handful of people who were settled there.

In 1860 Mr. Thomas Grove, believing there was coal in the Waratah hills, caused a tunnel to be driven into the side of the hill at a spot just a little below Braye Park, on the Waratah side. About that time a good deal of prospecting for coal was going on and the tunnel resulted, after driving only a few feet into the discovery of a very fine seam of coal seven to eight feet thick, being the Borehole Seam, which ended in the Waratah Hills. This tunnel was continued for some little distance, but owing to the dip in the seam, and the trouble in getting the water away, it was determined to drive a tunnel on the southern or Lambton side of the same hill, and in point of fact ultimately two tunnels were driven in there and worked for some years.

In 1863 Mr. Grove was instrumental in the formation and incorporation by Act of Parliament of the Waratah Coal Co. with a capital of £60,000 into 10,000 shares of £6 each, the first Directors being Thomas Sutcliffe Mort, of Mort's Dock fame, Thomas Ware Smart, Charles Smith, Benjamin Darley, Thomas Grove, Atkinson Alfred Patrick Tighe and William Steel. The mine was then completely developed, a railway line was built from Waratah to Port Waratah, where the coal was shipped, and later on this line was extended further west, and another tunnel opened, and the line became part of the boundary of the Municipal District of Waratah.

Mr. Grove had one child only, a daughter, who married in 1859 Mr. A. A. P. Tighe—by the way, an uncle of our respected townsmen, Mr. William Sparke, a resident of Waratah himself.
The 'Lady Nelson' was the first vessel to visit Port Waratah.

In 1863 Thomas Grove subdivided his 60 acre block into half-acre allotments, and in the first subdivision every lot was sold, being bought by people who were engaged in mining. Business premises were erected, and the first definite settlement to any extent in Waratah settled within the area of the 60 acre grant, the people building their houses and living there.

Incidentally Mr. Thomas Grove was the cause of a great deal of tribulation to the boys of my generation who attended the Waratah School. He called his subdivision "Hanbury," after his birthplace in England, but the railway station from the company for shipping their coal, but early in 1867 the Waratah Coal Co.'s line, on the site of each Gonzales's engineering works are now erected at Broadmeadow. These copper smelting works brought about settlement around what is known as Moate's Grant. which was granted to one Joseph Moate in 1853, but as he was never a resident of Waratah, and only bought the land from the Government for speculative purposes, I just mention the fact that Georgetown was the part of the subdivision made by his two sons, and on this land most of the smelters of the English, Scottish and Australian copper works built their homes and resided. The Copper Smelting Works at Port Waratah also brought about settlement on what we knew as Calcina Flat. The smelters were in the main all Welsh people at both works, having all come from copper smelting works at Cardiff and Swansea, in Wales.

In 1870 the Municipal district of Waratah was proclaimed, and by then a Public School had been built, which still stands, although considerably enlarged. Two smelting works had been established, two quarries were opened for the purpose of quarrying stone, one known as Stevens' Quarry and one as Whitman's Quarry, in the Waratah Hills so that by 1870 Thomas Grove had the satisfaction and the profitable pleasure of seeing as a result of his energy and enterprise, a thriving township of several hundred people with a well-established coal mine and works which gave constant employment to the inhabitants.

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The original old Grove home was standing when I was a child at the top of the Orange Grove which I referred to, at the corner of High and Bridge Streets, Waratah. It was a low, old place, consisting of slab and weatherboard and shingle roof. Mr. Grove, however, built himself a large and more elaborate residence which is still standing just below St. Phillips' Church of England, Waratah, adjacent to Bridge Street, but somewhere in the early 70's Grove left Waratah and returned to his native heath in England, where he died. One of his descendants living is Mr. Harry Tighe, an English novelist of some repute, who was a grandson, and another grandson was Mr. William Tighe, a prominent member of the New South Wales Bar, now deceased.

Incidentally it might be mentioned that Mr. Grove had the very doubtful honor of introducing the Lantana into Waratah, as for years a very thick hedge of it surrounded the Orange Grove along Bridge Street.

The next settler of note, as bringing about settlement in the area, was one Charles Simpson. Charles Simpson was Collector of Customs at Newcastle in the early 40's, and to him the honor must be ascribed of giving the name of Waratah to the district. In 1848 he took possession of 35½ acres of land which he had bought from the Government, on the banks of the river facing the eastward what is known as Kerr Street, but it was then called an Occupation Road of half a chain wide. This land near the River was covered with dense tropical brush, and some portion of the old trees still remain. Mr. Simpson cleared a portion of this brush, and from what I know of the country around there, it must have been a most mosquito-infested place at the time, and there he built what was considered in the early days of Newcastle quite a mansion, and he was rowed up and down to his duties in Newcastle by Government men. On the rise at the back of this house it is said was the place where the Waratah grew, and to signalise this, he called his home "Waratah House." The people of Newcastle, just as promptly, designated it "Simpson's Folly," and from these circumstances the name "Waratah House" still survives, and "The Folly" was the name by which all that part of North Waratah was known, the word "Simpson" having been dropped.

In addition to this grant of 35 acres, Mr. Simpson also obtained other grants of 34½ acres and 20 acres all in the same neighbourhood. He lived on his property from 1848 to 1854. In 1854 he, in conjunction with Mr. Charles Bolton, known as Major Bolton, another grantee, cut up their grants on the southern side of what is now known as Bull Street, and sold it in 5 acre blocks. The settlers who acquired the land cultivated it as vineyards and orchards. Among the notable families that settled there was Mr. Peter Crebert (after whom Crebert Street is named), who was one of the purchasers in 1854, and planted vineyards on his block, and made wine there for many years afterwards. Another was Phillip Kuhn, and other purchasers were Crowther, Walters or Waters, Robertson, Russell, Bull, Gray and Baker, and these settlers can be taken as the first of the early settlers in the area in 1854. Most of them were living on their properties in my childhood days at the end of the 70's.

The railway line was opened from Newcastle to Maitland in 1859, and the station at Waratah, owing to most of the inhabitants that were living on the North Waratah side, was named Waratah from that fact, as, owing to Simpson, the neighbourhood had been called "Waratah," and so the name has remained to this day.

In 1854 Simpson sold his land to Messrs. Morse & Tourle, of New England, squatters. Mr. Tourle lived there for many years, and also planted vineyards and carried on wine-making, which was still going on in the late 70's.

Another very early settler was Mr. William Thomas Brain. He, at the time when he was an old man, told me his history. He was a native of the farming portion of Warwickshire, and emigrated as a young man of 18 to New South Wales, in the year 1840.

He was engaged in Sydney by Major Scott, of Scott's Point, Ash Island, to work for him as a farm labourer on Ash Island, at 2/6 per week, and keep and clothing. He worked on Ash Island until the year 1852, when he bought an area of 67 acres, being two grants to a man named John Nott, to whom the land was granted in 1851. Nott never resided on his grants. These lands cleared by Brain, who brought his produce to Newcastle by boat, where it was sold. In addition, Brain bought an area of 32 acres of ground running from Bull Street down to Maitland Road, and the east boundary of which was Kerr Street. The
he used as a paddock. Early in 1864 he sold his farm properties to people who continued to farm them afterwards, and his own grant he sold in 1862, consisting of 32 acres, to Messrs. Roe & Harton. This land was subsequently subdivided by Mr. James Roe, and is now known as the “Newbottle Subdivision” of Waratah or Mayfield. This name, “Newbottle,” puzzled me for many years, and it was only in recent years that the explanation of its origin was known to me. Mr. James Roe had three subdivisions on the Mayfield side of Waratah, namely Monkwearmouth, Houghton-Le-Spring, and “New-Bottle.” Houghton-Le-Spring and Monkwearmouth are old County Durham names of which County in England Mr. Roe was a native—in other words, a Geordy. New-bottle should really be “New-Battle.” New-Battle Abbey, you will remember, was where one of the decisive engagements was fought in the Cromwellian Civil War, but in recent years it is a very extensive mining district, and it was to that district in Durham that Mr. Roe belonged, but apparently the Subdivision at Mayfield was spelt as it was pronounced by the Geordies, namely “New-Bottle,” instead of “New-Battle.”

Of all the numerous grantees of land within the area, there were very many that I have not had time to mention, there were only four of the original grantees who resided on the lands granted to them as settlers. These were John Laurio Platt, Thomas Grove, Charles Simpson and William Thomas Brain. All the other grantees apparently only bought for the purpose of holding the land, and made no use of it, and these, together with the families that settled at the Folly or North-Waratah, with names I have mentioned, and those on the Waratah side up to 1857, constituted the only permanent residents in the area.

I shall just mention shortly one other grant, but as it comes into what we call “modern history,” I do not intend to elaborate on it. This was a grant made on the 1st February, 1854, to James Price, of Buttal, of 29 acres one rood and 16 perches, bought by him in June 1853. Mr. James Price, of Buttal, never resided on this grant. He had a boiling-down establishment at Buttal, where he killed cattle and boiled down the tallow and collected the hides of the same. After passing through the hands of two other persons, neither of whom lived on the property, this land ultimately was conveyed on the 2nd April, 1851, to John Scholey, butcher of Newcastle. For years before the date of that conveyance, the paddock had been rented by Scholey as a slaughter-house paddock, upon which a slaughter-house was erected, and a residence for the slaughterman. The paddock was fenced and fairly heavily timbered. It started at the corner of Kerr Street and ran from there to Crebert Street, along Crebert Street eastward to within about five chains of Church Street, and then southward to the Maitland Road, and back to Kerr Street. Along the Maitland Road there was thick ti-tree bush, particularly at the corner where Amos’ Hotel now stands. I myself, as a boy, have stood on the second rail of the fence and gathered what we used to call “Roman Candles,” off the vine growing on the tops of the ti-trees. The rest of the land was open forest land.

In 1851 Mr. Scholey had this land cleared, stumped and subdivided, and called the Subdivision Mayfield. I believe after one of his daughters. This land was readily sold at good prices, and quickly built upon, mainly fine residences, especially those fronting Bull Street, and then residents being chiefly successful business people of Newcastle.

The settlement at the north side of Waratah had remained stationary, but the Mayfield Subdivision was quickly settled, and this brought into settlement also the New-Bottle Subdivision adjoining.

Now, lastly, as to another interesting grantee within the area, Mr. Henry Dangar. This gentleman was the founder of the Dangar family in New South Wales. A native of St. Neots, Cornwall, he arrived in New South Wales about the middle of 1821. He was employed as an assistant to Mr. Oxley, the Surveyor General of New South Wales, and continued in the employ of the Government until about 1829, when, owing to a dispute with that nasty person, Governor Darling, in connection with land matters in Scone, he retired from the Government Service, and was employed as a Surveyor for the A.A. Co. It should be mentioned, however, that whilst in Government employment in 1826, he was one of the Government Surveyors who surveyed out the considerable grant of 1,000,000 acres to the A.A. Co. In all there were granted to him within the area of Waratah 241 acres, and these grants stretched from Platt’s Channel right down to the Maitland Road, and were continued on to the

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three-cornered piece of land of the A.A. Co., which I have referred to, and continued then right to Georgetown Road, which went through one of his grants.

Mr. Dangar was never a resident, and apparently, with Cornish acquisitiveness, obtained the land purely for holding purposes. It is possible that he had some idea of turning them into farming lands, as in every instance he was shrewd enough to take his land up where fresh water creeks ran through them.

There are quite a number of other grants that I could refer to, but time does not permit, nor would the history of them be of any great interest.