

BOWRAL by I. H. Scott

For the earliest history of Bowral and its surrounding districts we go back to the year 1797, when one Wilson and his party journeyed on foot from the neighbourhood of Parramatta, through the country afterwards called Picton and Bargo, to near Joadja and Bullio, thence over Gingenbullen and back via the Sutton Forest and Moss Vale country, and the Mittagong Range. Later, in 1814, Hamilton Hume and his brother visited the area and gave glowing descriptions of the country.

Lieut. John Oxley, R.N., who was afterwards appointed Surveyor-General, took cattle along the route described by the Humes and thus, in 1815, became the first settler near Bowral. In 1825 Governor Brisbane authorised the sale of 5,000 acres of land to Oxley at 5/-per acre. On his death in 1828 the sale was cancelled and a free grant of land made to his widow and two sons in recognition of his services as Surveyor-General.

One of the sons, H. M. Oxley, started banking with us in 1866 at Berrima where we had a branch from 1866 to 1894. The account was transferred to Bowral when this branch was opened in 1877 and the family has been with us ever since.

The famous "Oxley cheese" was originally made in 1906 when a member of the Oxley family had one of his employees taught cheese-making. The first batch had the consistency of, and tasted like, galoshes, but four years later the factory won the Gold Medal at Sydney Show. Until shortage of staff closed the factory during the last war it consistently produced some of the finest cheese in Australia.

W. J. Cordeaux was also one of the very early settlers, about 1817, and his holding "Bendooley" remained in the hands of the Cordeaux family until about 1919. A grandson, W. J. Cordeaux, was manager of our Pitt and Bathurst Streets branch for many years, and another son, Arthur E. Cordeaux, opened our Robertson branch at the age of 21. A third grandson —Stanley Moore Cordeaux—was also in the bank but resigned about 1905. Incidentally, the Moore relation after whom he was named owned about 1,000 acres in Sydney (Moore Park was named after him) and at one stage he was advised to get rid of a parcel of land at the corner of King and Sussex Streets as it had no value!

Famous Firsts

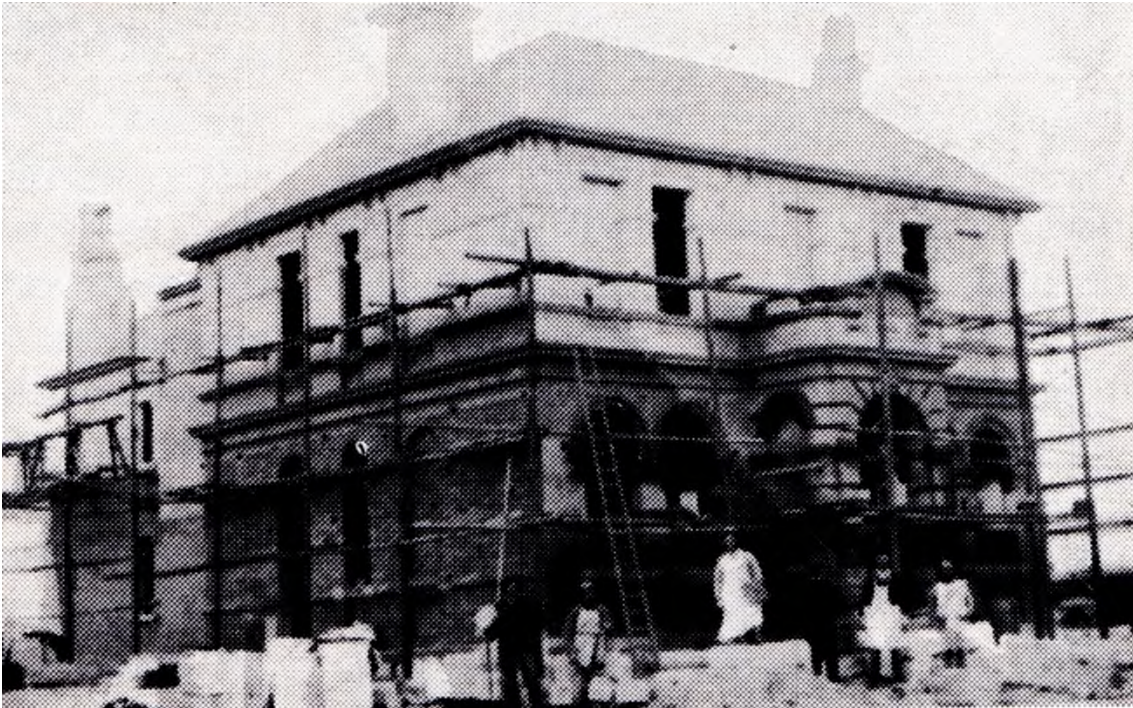
Dairying is the main primary industry and the rich volcanic country is ideal for the purpose. The first milk sent from the country to Sydney, in 1876, was railed from Bowral, and the first Australian butter was sent to England from here in 1884.

The Berrima district is considered one of the premier health and holiday resorts in Australia. Its pivot, Bowral, which now has a population of 5,000 and the other key towns of Mittagong and Moss Vale, attract many tourists by the scenic beauty of the surrounding country with its waterfalls, delicate flora and magnificent views.

Garden lovers will be well repaid if they visit Bowral in the spring and autumn. Tens of thousands of tulips have been planted this year to bloom in the parks and gardens in the early weeks of October, and these, together with the usual daffodils, hyacinths, lily-of-the-valley and other spring flowers and blossoms, will make the coming spring outstanding and a floral feast long to be remembered.

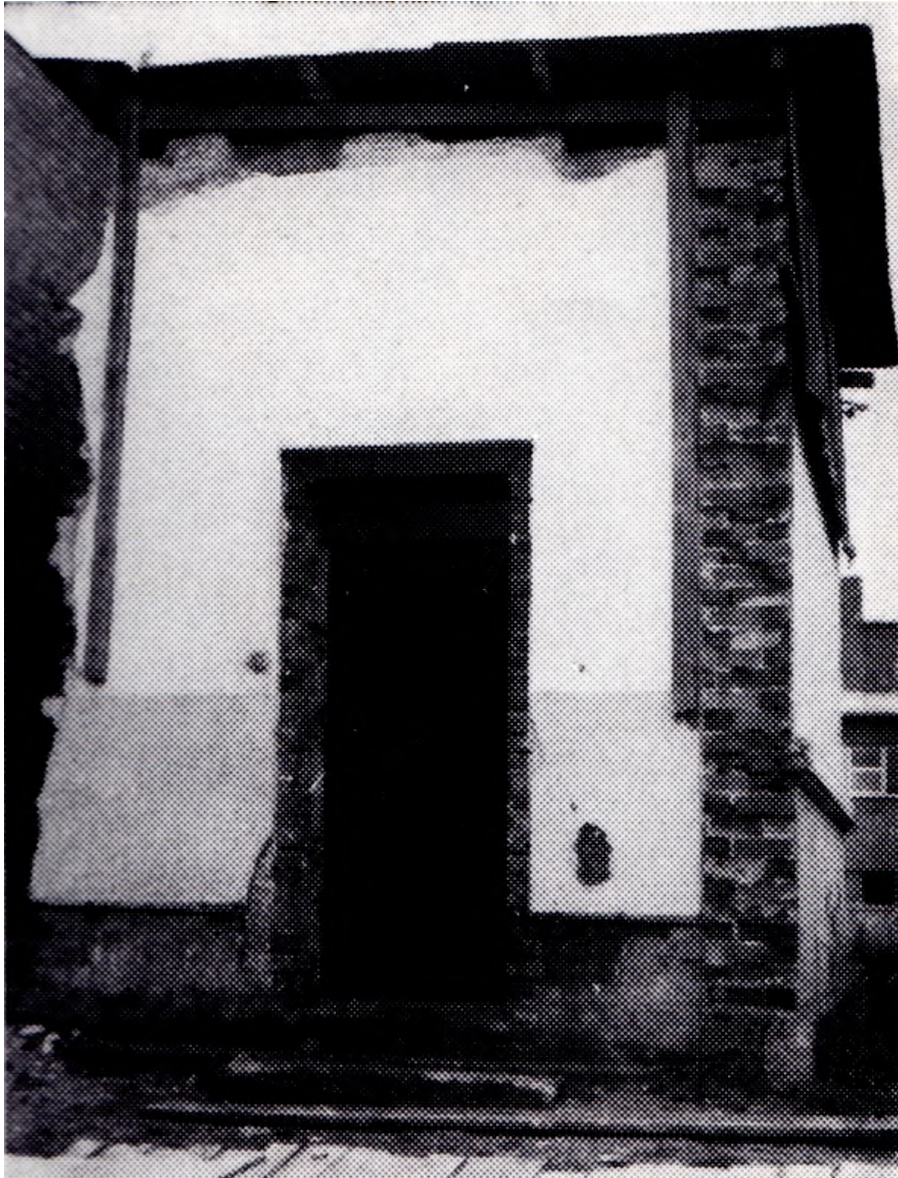
Our branch was opened in 1877 and was the first bank established in this town. At first business was conducted in leased premises at the corner of Merrigan and Bendooley Streets and, later, next door to Du-prez's shop in Bong Bong Street. The corner block of

the present site was purchased in 1879 for £750, and the adjoining block, upon part of which the Post Office now stands, was purchased in 1881 for £185. The present U.C.V. of the land is £18,450 (1960).



On 3rd March, 1884, the bank commenced to operate from its own premises in the building which was demolished early last year (1960). For the 76 years it stood upon the site this fine old building was a landmark at the northern end of Bong Bong Street and many old residents of Bowral still regret that it has had to make way for a modern structure.

Although the premises had gone from around it, the old strongroom was used during the nine months of rebuilding operations.



Large windows on the northern side are a feature of the new building and the lighting, both natural and fluorescent, is excellent. The fittings in Katourm, a Pacific Island timber, are attractive and the furnishings are all in the modern style.

No history of Bowral would be complete without a reference to The Gib, a dominating and attractive feature of the town. In one of his reports, Sir Thomas Mitchell, who succeeded Oxley as Surveyor-General, said "The Mittagong Range terminates abruptly in a rock named by the natives Bowrel and by the stockmen Mount Gibraltar." It is thought that Oxley named it after another impressive rock which he, as a Royal Navy man, knew so well, and there is little doubt that the name Bowral is simply the old native name spelt differently.

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