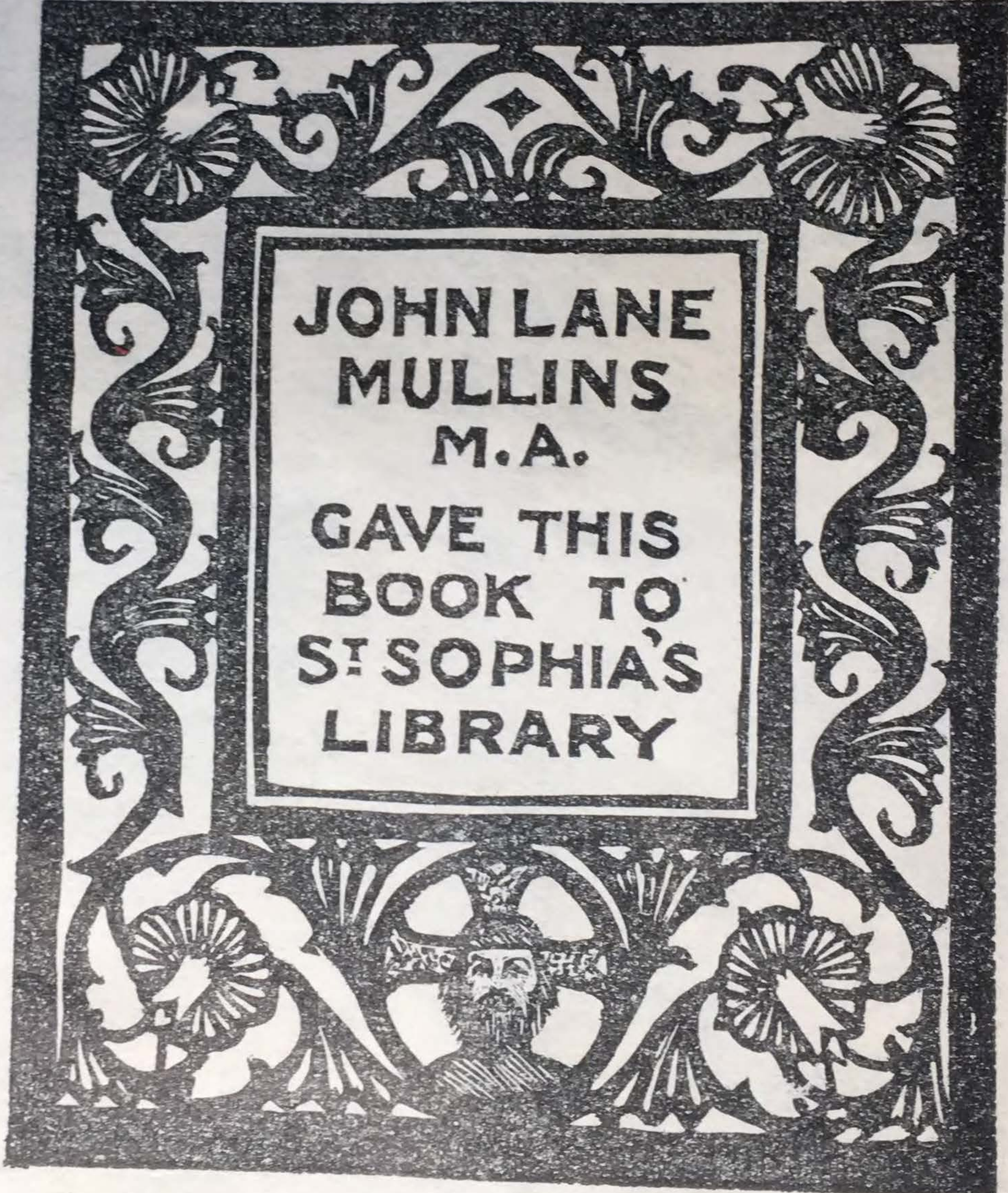

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On Paterson and Allyn Rivers

Gresford Memories

Well does the writer remember the charming old homes in the Gresford district. A picturesque place, the small town, and the surrounding district, endears itself to the memory. Where now you see modern residences the writer remembers, with pleasure, those earlier homes, built when Gresford was a new settlement in the hills beyond Maitland. Built flat on the ground, these old homes were long and narrow, with shingled roofs, and with their rooms opening into one another, rooms with wide fireplaces and small-paned windows, with bells to summon the servants, and doors with curious knobs and quaint knockers. Most of the rooms faced a long verandah, which fronted a garden, gay and sweet with old fashioned flowers, with an aviary for feathered pets, and a summer house for lovers.

"CLEVEDON."

The home of Mr. and Mrs. James McCormick, and afterwards of Mr. and Mrs. Doyle, daughter and son-in-law of the former owners, was one of the most picturesque. Enormous box trees guarded the house and dropped their leaves on its shingled roof; in the branches of the box trees, kookaburras laughed at dawn and at sunset, and watched with amazement, the peacocks as they wandered through the garden, where hedges of red and pink roses sprawled away to the creek in leafy and blossom-laden

abandon. Scarlet pomegranate flowers decked glossy leafed trees, and never has the writer seen or tasted such pomegranates as grew in that old garden.

Land grants had ceased when James McCormick came to New South Wales, therefore he did not have the "jumping off place" accorded so many other pioneers. Realising his lack of experience with unfamiliar conditions, he gained it with Mr. Townshend, of Trevallyn, one of Gresford's earliest pioneers. His experience gained, Mr. McCormick looked about for a farm, and decided, first on Belleville, now known as Talgah. Here he grew tobacco, and laid the foundation of future prosperity. Later on, he moved to Mullinroo, where afterwards Mr. Dosey lived, and which is now owned by Mr. Crew. In an old letter, written by Mrs. McCormick, from Mullinroo, and dated Feb. 20, 1848, she speaks of her husband having 500 horned cattle on an out-station (Carrabolla), and 20 head of horses. She also speaks of returning to Ireland, for to her this venture to Australia was but a long exile from her beloved and picturesque home at Drummin, near Barmeath Castle, which belonged to her uncle, Sir Patrick Bellew, and which is one of the most historic homes in Ireland. Yet she never returned to the dear Green Isle, and to-day her great-grandsons, the Doyle Brothers, of Norwood, West Gresford,

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are to be found living on their various farms.

It was thought in early days, that Gresford would grow towards Singleton, and town allotments were accordingly marked out in that direction. Probably the lack of a bridge over a crossing that still cries to Heaven for that long delayed bridge was one of the main reasons that turned the township in the direction of Maitland.

Clevedon was on the Maitland road, and from Mullinroo to Clevedon was but a short move to an enterprising man like Mr. McCormick. He purchased Clevedon, and began to breed horses for the Indian market. Clevedon had originally been a horse station.

The venture proved exceedingly profitable, and, even now, this trade in "Walers" could be pursued with profit by Australia. The Indian market is greedy for horseflesh, and it has been proved that the "Waler" is the favourite. In addition to trading in horses, McCormick grew tobacco and planted vineyards and orchards. Nearly all these early homes were busy centres of industry, miniature townships in themselves, with cottages for the workmen, sheds, barns and stables. Later on, in Mr. Doyle's time, a big brick house went up near the early home, and under it the wine cellars were built. Here stood enormous casks with gigantic bungs, here were huge vats to hold the purple fruit; in vintage time, this was the busiest part of the whole place, and it was thrilling to hear an old sailor chanting his nautical songs as he rolled the huge casks into place to the cellars underneath the dining room. "Yo, ho! Yo, ho! Yo, ho!" his voice would echo far and near, as he broke into the refrain of some old song.

In its turn, the red brick building gave way to the modern house built

by Mr. Edward Sarsefield Doyle, and which stands nearer the road, bordered by shady ironbarks, which form a beautiful avenue as one approaches Gresford. But, it is the old home with its garden, its rose hedges and its brilliant stately peacocks that lingers, like a dream, in the memory. Not a vestige of that old home remains.

"Norwood," another early home on the Singleton side of Gresford, was also purchased by Mr. McCormick. Formerly owned by Commodore Gibbs, it stood on top of a windy hill overlooking the river. Long and narrow, like Clevedon, it, too, had its verandah upon which most of the rooms opened. Its French windows are still to be seen in the modern home which is owned now by Mr. Alister McCormick Doyle. Tobacco was grown here also, and many a small home could be seen where now only a dairy herd roams. When the Commodore's pretty young wife died, broken-hearted, he moved away, letting the place to various people, among whom Dr. Hector is well remembered. Finally, it was bought by Mr. McCormick, who rented it to Mr. Cooper, living then at Trevallyn, Mr. Townshend having unfortunately lost most of his property which had extended for many miles up the river. Norwood was left to Mr. Joseph McCormick Doyle, whose eldest son, Mr. Alister McCormick Doyle, now lives there with his wife and family. But the original home is only a dream of the past.

"Killburn," owned by Mr. W. Jones, can be seen not far away. Built of stout grey stone, it has weathered the years well, and still stands on its ridge facing the river. This old home was a different type from Clevedon and Norwood, which were built mostly of wood. Stone stands the wear and tear of time, and, with care, will see many generations tucked safely

away under soft green mounds. All this country is suitable for dairying and fattening, and away back in the hills is Oakey Creek, part of Norwood Estate, and owned now by Mr. Gerald Doyle, youngest of the Doyle brothers. From Oakey Creek come the fattest and sleekest of fat cattle, cattle that top the market, and are a joy to their owner's heart.

Across the river stands Trevallyn, originally built by Mr. Townshend, and owned now by Mr. Walter Reynolds. A lovely old place, it, too, has its garden, hedged with red and pink roses which attracted the birds, bees and butterflies from far and near. Well cleared paddocks now surround Trevallyn, though years ago, they must have been well studded with beautiful timber. Further along the river and nearer Gresford is Orrindina, home of Mr. Glennie, who won the heart of Miss Townshend.

"Camyr Allyn," another old home, owned by Mr. Charles Boydell, was a grant from the Government. Years ago, the writer spent a very happy holiday in this picturesque old home, which also had its flower-bright garden, and its orchard which scented the air. But with its trumpet flowers, roses, honeysuckle and May blossom, it too has vanished into the past, and a modern building, built and owned by Mr. Champain, has taken its place, though it stands on another part of the estate.

"Torryburn" is still another early home not forgotten by the writer, for here she went on a visit in the family carriage drawn by two magnificent horses. Originally owned by a stern hard man, whose name is forgotten, but who was killed by his convicts, Torryburn was finally purchased by Mr. Logan, one of Gresford's most enterprising pioneers. He went as far as Queensland, taking the necessities of life to far-a-way settlers in

that sister State, and thereby laid the foundation of his own fortune. The possibilities were so great, that when he returned to New South Wales, he did his best to persuade other young men to follow his example. One, at least, took that advice, a Mr. Dalgleish, nephew of Mr. Park, of Lewinsbrook. He too made a fortune.

Men like Mr. Logan, Mr. McCormick, and Mr. Dalgleish were the finest type of colonist that a young country could have. Starting from scratch, nothing daunted them, and they won, as the years passed, the reward that was justly theirs. But Torryburn estate has been cut up and the old home pulled down. Like dreams these picturesque buildings of early days are swallowed up by the years. Soon, no one will remember them at all.

"Lewinsbrook," a nearby estate, was a grant to Mr. Alexander Park, and left by him to his brother, Dr. Park. The latter gentleman was a bulwark of strength to the district, for medical aid was much needed, and Gresford, separated as it was from the bigger centres by many miles and most indifferent roads, was fortunate in having its Dr. Park. Lewinsbrook was famous for its oranges, as, indeed, the whole district was and still is. Vineyards, too, dotted its flats. Most of these early homes had their vineyards and wine-cellars. Prohibition had not even been dreamed of.

Another old home which still stands, "Cawarra," was owned by Dr. Lindeman. Cawarra is still in the family's possession. A busy centre this, with its vineyards and orchards; the wine industry flourished here in old days, but latterly the vineyards have been rooted up for various reasons, though Cawarra wines are still on the market, a good favourite, and well in the lead.

Higher up the river stood "Coulston," the home of Mr. Brown, for

many years member of the district. The old home overlooked a wonderful panorama of country and, like the other old homes around, was famous for its hospitality.

"Penshurst," the home of Mr. Holden, was a splendid property, as, indeed, all were. But here, too, time has conquered and the old home has given way to a modern house on another site. Penshurst has been cut up and subdivided, and the original owners have departed.

"Caergule" was a grant to Mr. William Boydell. The old home is still to be seen half hidden behind its trees and shrubs. Not far off stands the modern house, but it is the old home that charms, the old home which is up-to-date enough to have the telephone along the wires of which swing curious, exploring, and furry little opossums.

Early Gresford was a formal place. The old folk had a proper sense of values. Before they exchanged visits, word was sent a week or even a month ahead, and when the time came to set forth, out came the family carriage to which was harnessed the carriage horses. A servant in livery drove, and sometimes there was an outrider in attendance. They knew how to do things then! The telephoning of to-day would have horrified them. Cars would have lacked the ceremony so beloved by them. In all these old homes one found the furniture which is now so eagerly sought after by lovers of antiques. Massive sideboards, ponderous one-legged tables; straight-backed cedar chairs, standing like a row of soldiers against the wall of the hospitable dining rooms; cabinets holding large pieces of exquisite coral protected by glass domes; huge four poster beds; lovely old chests of drawers, where great-grandfather's embroidered waistcoat

found room with great-grandmother's shawls, quaint mirrors which reflected sweet faces framed in poke bonnets. Alas, how many of the old treasures have been sold, lost or destroyed by unappreciative grandchildren.

But, thank heaven, the great grandchildren have learned to appreciate the treasures of other days and we find the old cedar chairs brought back from the kitchen to the dining room, the four-poster beds reinstated and decorated again with brand new frills and valances. Occupying honoured places now instead of being banished to cellar, kitchen and attic, these relics of a bygone age are valued once more and polished with pride and delight.

But I doubt if we could go back to the family carriages and abandon the luxury of our modern cars. No, not even if we had a servant in livery and an outrider!

The young folk of Gresford, and, indeed, their elders, too, were more than fortunate in having as schoolmaster that cultured and charming gentleman, Mr. Bush, who with his wife and family lived for many years at the Cross Road at West Gresford. That was an important Cross Road. Like a great spider it stretched its arms in all directions.

One arm led to Cawarra and to Fry's livery stables. Where would Gresford have been without Fry's mail coach? For many a year the old coach swung up and down these steep hills, dipped into gullies and jerked over culvertless creeks. But it, too, has vanished and a car now spins along the Maitland-road.

Another arm led towards Singleton, but this important thoroughfare of the State has been neglected for more years than one cares to calculate, and

settlement did not advance towards Singleton as it should have.

Another arm stretched up into the hills above Gresford, to Mt. Rivers, Lostock, and finally to Carrabolla, that isolated settlement in the hills. What rivers the traveller had to cross, what hills to scale and descend! It was a long weary day's journey from Carrabolla, yet men and women rode down, carrying children and luggage on horseback. Gresford's first music teacher, Miss Maria Connelly, rode sideways on a man's saddle from Lostock or thereabouts, to Maitland, where she took music lessons and afterwards imparted them to the budding musicians of Gresford.

At Mt. Rivers lived the O'Neils and the MacNamaras, warm-hearted Irish folk. It is with pleasure that the writer remembers paying a visit to that grand old lady, Miss Ellen MacNamara, who told her much of early Gresford. And how delighted was the old lady to find someone who longed to hear about the old folk and their doings.

And what a place was Gresford for birds, feathered and otherwise! There were the Chicks, the Ducks, the Goslings, the Birds, and goodness knows how many more hidden away in the hills. Gresford had them all, and each did his or her bit to help put Gresford on the map.

In West Gresford the genial Tom Walker plied his blacksmith's hammer at the old forge, and exchanged many a jest with his customers. His wit was known far and wide, and many a good yarn was swapped while the horse was shod. Dennie Smith, too, best of all saddlers, was celebrated up and down the river, as also was that busy and indispensable shoemaker, Mr. Kelehar, whose shop faced

the cross road. There were many others who helped make Gresford the go-ahead little township it has become.

I could go on writing for ever about the old folk and the old homes, for, though I appreciate the modern homes, it is the old homes that I love. Where do we see rose hedges now, aviaries, peacocks, or even summer houses? To-day all is rush and hurry and bustle. In the old days, the old folk sat and dreamed in their gardens, great-grandfather played whist and great-grandmother stitched at her antimacassars, seated bolt upright on one of those cedar chairs. She wore a lace cap, too, and great-grandfather a top hat, and sometimes, while great-grandmother struggled with the baking of bread and the brewing of cowslip wine, he tried his hand at ploughing in white kid gloves! He had a servant to light his pipe, dear old grandee that he was, and how ever he succeeded in such unfamiliar surroundings, I don't know.

Nevertheless, it is due to the pluck, prudence and perseverance of these early pioneers in Gresford and elsewhere, that the young folk of to-day are enjoying their cars and their fine new homes with their modern conveniences and luxuries. Courageous enough to try their luck in a new land, the old folk faced conditions that must have appalled them. Yet, if ever their spirits come back, they must rejoice in the happiness and prosperity of the young folk who live after them—but I fear they would be lost in the new homes that have replaced those dear old homes of long ago.

RUBY DOYLE, Dungog.

March, 1932.