**Bits from Beecroft. [1924]**

**Cumberland Argus and Fruitgrowers Advocate, Sat 8 Mar 1924**

By a Bush Ranger. [Edward Knapp junior]

‘I have no direct or indirect interest here [Beecroft], save as a tenant. But the district, as a residential one, is going ahead. Mostly peopled by retired civil servants, professional men, and retired well-to-do tradesmen. Too far from Sydney, too long time travelling, and too expensive for the horny-handed folk to "sit down" at. Within the last four or five years, many fine bungalows have been built and many more are now being erected. At last, after banging at the G.P.O., a post office is being erected, junction of Hannah and Beecroft-roads. Time it was, as the business, for several years, has been carried on in an ex-butcher's shop. About 2500 live within a mile and a half, and, all this time, a space, not eight feet square, has been allotted to the public in which to transact business, which has recently been much increased by that obliging and capable postmaster, Mr. William Oldroyd, who has raised the classification by his energy, resulting in a new post office. Beecroft boasts of a neat building in its School of Arts; has four churches, school-rooms, girls' college, two bowling greens, a tennis court; and was recently honoured by that great (little) man, our ex-Prime Minister, the Right Hon. W. M. Hughes, P.C., on her golf ground. The public school on Beecroft-road is largely attended, and is under the able guideship of Mr. Forsyth. The district has the head wireless station (at Carlingford), part of the Pennant Hills district, the bulk of the population being at Beecroft - a residential suburb. That it is a healthy spot I know: six years ago, I came here with first-class rheumatism. It's gone! So have the fine orchards which were here 60 years ago!’

‘It Is 65 or more years ago since a young licensed surveyor [Edward Knapp junior] was instructed by the then Surveyor-General, W. Allerton [Allaster Grant] Maclean**\*** (an Austral-Scot), to survey the (then called) Lane-Cove-road, right through to Parramatta (the place where the eels "sit" down); as well as a number of branch roads, leading to Ryde, Parramatta, and between that river and the Hawkesbury.’

‘Sparsely Peopled.

His field book shows just about 60 huts and w. b. houses, all the distance from St. Leonard's (as The Shore was then called) to Parramatta, about 17 miles, via the Crow's Nest. After passing the Green Gate Pub, (kept by one, Waterhouse) [Lane Cove], the road was then but a little better than numerous cart tracks through the dense scrub. The only cleared lands were those won from the bush by sturdy pioneers, in the guise of orchardists.’

Such Orchards!

Never was any other part of New South Wales able to show such splendid acres of the golden oranges. Nor so extensive an area of fruits of all sorts. At Pymble (named after the grantee) was a magnificent orchard, owned by one of the old Hills' family. It was in full bearing ere Edward Hammond Hargraves (12/2/'51) made known that gold was to be found at Ophir. And, when the precious metal was first unearthed in Victoria, in such abundance that the diggers hardly knew how to "knock down" their money. Hills shipped his oranges, etc., to the Ovens. In one year, he pocketed £2000.

There were scores of plantations then, and many oranges, overhanging the road fences, found their way into the swag of "Weary Willie," or the pockets of school boys, who spent their Saturday holidays along the Lane Cove-road, then a picturesque district.

At the Pennant Hills, so named by Governor Macquarie, who was invited to a picnic on an Anniversary Day (no regatta then). The settlers hadn't a "Jack," so they hoisted a long Pennant. The Governor noted this, saying: I name the district "The Pennant Hills." This

district had, with Ryde, more orchards than any other part, and it was a picture, in the season, which gladdened those of artistic taste, as well as gastronomic.’

Ryde, Pennant Hills, and Field of Mars.

These, only, were the ones, in those days, referred to. No Chatswood, Roseville, Lindfield, Gordon, Wahroonga, Killara, or Hornsby in those days. "Hornesby" is the correct name. I cut up Horne's 320-acre grant for him, in 5 to 10-acre blocks; and, when J. H. [J.F.] Staff [licensed 1861-1873+], auctioneer at Parramatta, asked me to value it, I said, "£5 an acre." I attended the sale. There was not a bid. "The idea," said some; "£5 an acre for bush land - exorbitant!" The Field of Mars was granted to soldiers - hence the name. It was, then, so far in the bush they "bucked" at settling on it. I could have bought scores of acres at £1 an acre then. Tho' pressed, I said "No!" For it was a day's journey from Sydney. It paid no one to live there but the orchardist. 'There was no railway beyond The Junction (now Granville).

**\*Allaster Grant MacLean**

**Northern Times (Newcastle), Wed 17 Aug 1859**

Government Gazette.

‘His Excellency the Governor General, with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to appoint Alexander Grant Maclean, Esq., to be Acting Surveyor General of New South Wales.’

**Sydney Morning Herald, Wed 5 Aug 1863**

MONUMENT TO-THE MEMORY OF THE

LATE MR. A. G. MACLEAN.

‘The friends of the late Mr. Allaster Grant Maclean, whose demise, at the early age of 37 years, caused deep regret not only among his relatives and immediate personal friends but also a very large section of this community with whom Mr Maclean was brought into contact, both in his official capacity as Surveyor-General, and also as a commissioned officer of the Volunteer Rifles, have placed a monument to his memory over the spot where his remains were interred in the Episcopalian churchyard at Mulgoa. The monument is about twelve feet high, and consists of a square base, on which rises a round column, of plain stone, broken at the top, and intended to convey the idea of a ruined pillar, such as are found among the remains of ancient architecture. The monument stands near the entrance to the church, which is built on an eminence, and can, therefore, be seen from a considerable distance. The inscriptions on the tablets are as follows:

SACRED

to the Memory of

ALLASTER GRANT MACLEAN,

Surveyor-General

of

New South Wales.

Died 28th September, 1862.

Aged 37 years.

Second son of John Leyburn Maclean, formerly of H.M. 43rd Regiment of Foot, and for many years Principal superintendent of Convicts in this Colony, and of Jane Eliza his wife.

Erected by the widow, and brothers, and a few of the most intimate personal friends of the deceased, in testimony to his high qualities and rare worth, and in humble resignation to a bereavement which has entailed a public loss upon this community,

"I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." - St. John xi c. 25 v. '

We are also informed that a portrait of Mr. Maclean is now being painted by Mr. James Anderson, measuring 7 feet 10 inches by 4 feet 10 inches. This portrait is to be placed in the Survey Office, the funds for the execution of which have been subscribed by the gentlemen of that department.’