

BOOK REVIEWS

Introduction to Archives: A BBC Publication by F. G. Emmison. 1964.

This is essentially a handbook to be used in conjunction with eight BBC broadcasts dealing with local history. Mr. Emmison, who is the County Archivist of Essex, has set out to introduce the reader to archives in general but has given only the briefest definitions of national archives and where they may be found, the emphasis being on local records and repositories. For all the limitations of an "introduction" of the most elementary kind, the booklet is a remarkably succinct and informative statement of how and where to find records relating to *places* (borough records and parish registers both ecclesiastical and civil) and *persons* (birth, marriage and death Registers, Wills, Census Returns, Tithe and Enclosure Awards, Hearth Tax Lists, Rate-books, etc.). Apart from a few hints to serious researchers, the book is obviously addressed to amateur historians to whom local history is a hobby—

Many archive users want to find out more about their county or town, village or house or about roads and bridges, inns and almhouses, and so on.

The extent to which separate indexing—places, persons and subjects—of archival material in England seems to have advanced makes this both possible, and enviable to Australian archivists still struggling to produce preliminary inventories. The publication is 28 pages with 10 pages of plates explained and translated in an appendix.

Guide to the State Archives of New South Wales. Record Group NC 11. Commissariat, 1788-1870. Preliminary inventory. The Archives Authority of New South Wales, Sydney, 1963.

This is one of the Preliminary Inventories issued as part of the proposed Australia-wide *Guide to Pre-Federation Archives*. It is the first such inventory that has come out under the imprint of the Archives Authority of New South Wales, although it is in direct succession to two small publications issued by the then Archives Department of the Public Library of New South Wales, in 1959 and 1960.

It constitutes an extremely detailed description of records of the Commissariat Department and its various branches, and these records measure in total only 5 feet 8½ inches by linear measurement. A lengthy introduction (some 10,000 words) gives the history of the Commissariat Department, followed by descriptions of the general records of this authority, which measure only one foot six inches, and consist mainly of abstracts of stores and receipts, and copies of instructions issued to the Commissary. One of the most interesting records in this series, the "State of the Settlement" record of persons receiving stores, covers only two years (1792-4), and is listed only as an appendix in a volume of 23 inches (shelved flat). Records of the Stores Branch measure 12½ inches and cover the years 1828-35. Other records are those of the Accounts Branch (1 foot 10½ inches) and the Dependent Settlements. These latter include Registers of persons receiving rations at Norfolk Island, 1792-6;

and Windsor, 1812-18; also copies of letters written by the Deputy Assistant Commissary of Van Diemen's Land, 1819-23, 1827-8. The Dependent Settlements series measures in all 7½ inches. It seems clear from this survey that the smaller the quantity of records, the more actually has to be said about them. The intending student is given a very clear impression as to what is, and what is not, contained in these records. As many words have been used in description as in the Tasmanian *Governor's Office Record Group* (Tasmanian State Archives, 1958) although the latter material covers a much larger period (1816-1933), and at least 100 feet of shelf space, to say nothing of the comparative value of the series of records described in the two preliminary inventories. The format of the New South Wales publication has been designed to give the utmost clarity. It is produced in a processed form, with justified typewriter setting, and is easy to read. Students of Australian history, and other archivists in Australia, will look forward to the production of yet more parts of the Guide to the State Archives of New South Wales.

D. Wheeler.