

Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

Bulletin of Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

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Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society and
Museum and Galleries Hunter Chapter



The Sophia Jane

Volume 27, Number 3

August 2020

*The Aims of the Society are to
Discover, Record, Preserve, Advise on and Teach the History of Maitland and the
District*

Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

Cover: The image of the ship “Sophia Jane” relates to the article on Maitland’s “port”.

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Location: 3 Cathedral Street Maitland (opposite Bishop’s House)

Lecture meetings are held on the first Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7.00pm as a forum for lectures, talks and presentations.

Business meetings are held on the third Tuesday of even months from 5:30-7.00pm.

Committee meetings are held on the third Tuesday of odd months from 5:30-7.00pm.
Members are invited to attend all monthly meetings.

Meetings are held at the Society’s rooms, 3 Cathedral Street Maitland.

Membership fees : \$20 (single) and \$30 (double / family)

COVID 19 update: The rooms are open to members between 11 and 3 on Wednesdays and Saturdays. Social distancing and COVID protocols apply. The lecture meetings are still in abeyance.

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Bulletin contributions are being sought. Please contact the Society via email
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Editor's Notes:

During this COVID 19 period our secretary Steve Bone has been keeping Society members in touch by sending out newsletters which contain, *inter alia*, articles written by members. In this Bulletin are reproduced two articles which have appeared in those newsletters, as well as an enlightening article on Freemasonry in Maitland. Enjoy!

Deep water river port was what gave Maitland the edge

By Kevin Short

Why did Maitland prosper and rise to prominence in the middle of the 19th Century; what did Maitland have that other settlements in the colony did not?

There's no single answer to the first question but there is a finite answer to the second. While other regions also had fine, well watered agricultural land, Maitland had more - it possessed a deep water river port, the rise of which coincided with the arrival of reliable steam sea transport to the principal market at Sydney.

On May 13th, 1831 the "Sophia Jane" arrived from England. She was a flush-decked, schooner-rigged paddle-ship, 126 feet long, 20 feet wide and of 256 tons. Equipped with 50 horsepower engines and with sails as a source of auxiliary power, with a draught of 6 feet, she could make eight miles an hour in smooth water.

The Sophia Jane had 16 berths in the men's first saloon cabin, 11 in the ladies', and could take 20 steerage passengers. She plied between Sydney and Green Hills (Morpeth).

The Sophia Jane was joined in this service a few months later by the "William IV", also a schooner-rigged paddle-boat built of Australian 'flooded gum'.

She was launched on October 22, 1831, at Clarence Town on the Williams River above Raymond Terrace. This vessel was 80 feet long, 20 feet wide, and had a draught of six feet and a speed of about seven miles an hour.

The William IV, which made its first trip to Newcastle in February 1832, was advertised to leave Sydney every Monday evening at seven, and to receive and discharge goods at Mr Walker's store on Mr Close's land, Green Hills. The fare to the latter place was 25/- cabin, 15/- steerage, and to Newcastle 20/- cabin and 12/6 steerage.

The William IV also transported goods and people up the second branch (Paterson River). Thus Mrs Broughton, wife of the Bishop of Australia, and her two daughters, returning from a visit to Gresford early in 1840, caught the

William IV at Paterson.

Whilst these two steamers were the first, they were only the forerunners of a constant coming and going of boats between Sydney and Green Hills. Of course these vessels were small compared with those of later decades but they were witness to the activity and productivity of the Hunter River Valley.

Green Hills, or Morpeth, with its four wharves and 18 or so inns, was the head of navigation, the port for the inland, and was for decades of far greater importance than Newcastle.

- This information is taken principally from AP Elkin's 'The Diocese of Newcastle' (1955)

Dimmocks: From small start to Maitland family dynasty

By Chas Keys

Thomas Dimmock was an important figure in Maitland business circles for many years either side of 1900.



The firm he established in about 1878 still exists: six generations of Dimmocks have operated it. It may be Maitland's longest continuously functioning family firm.

The business was established by Henry Thomas in 1854 in High St, opposite the former Congregational Church now occupied by the Maitland Repertory Theatre. Before long Henry had apprenticed a 12-year-old boy called Thomas Dimmock. Eventually, Dimmock left Thomas's employ to work for the Maitland Mercury, but he returned to buy his first employer out.

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Dimmock proved to be a capable, forward-looking entrepreneur, and the business grew profitably under his stewardship.

In due course it became the largest printing and wholesale stationery house between Newcastle and the Queensland border, developing a reputation for quality printing work at prices below those charged in Sydney.

'Thos' Dimmock prospered. In 1900 he built an expensive, well-appointed house which still stands at the corner of Elgin St and Olive St.

Evidently he had become a member of Maitland's business elite and a leading member of several important institutions including the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association, the Maitland and District Chamber of Commerce, the Loyal Good Design Lodge of Oddfellows, the Protestant Alliance Friendly Society, the Maitland Mutual Building Society and St Mary's Church.

He was on the board of the Building Society as a director from its inception in 1888, and for a time was its chairman.



The Dimmock building

The business expanded, more people being employed and new and larger premises becoming necessary.

In 1901 the firm moved into a new two-storey red-brick building just west of the intersection of Charles St and High St and next to the Bank of NSW Arcade.

One measure of Dimmock's situation shortly after the turn of the century was that his business had a telephone: its number was 28.

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In 1905 there were only 82 subscribers to the infant telephone service of West Maitland and East Maitland which at that time would have had about 3000 dwellings and business premises.

The population of the area of the current City of Maitland was about 12,000, more than half of it in West Maitland centred on the High St business district.

Over time the machinery associated with developing new printing technologies was installed in the printery, lithographic work and colour printing being introduced along with bookbinding, and orders came in from a wide area extending well beyond the Hunter Valley.

Around 1910 extensions were made to the rear of the premises, and in 1923 the floor area of the business was tripled by the construction of an even bigger two-storey building adjoining the first structure on its eastern side.

Dimmocks was to operate out of this very large facility at 359-63 High St for decades. The retail stationery outlet, needing visibility, fronted High St with the printing operation located at the rear.

Employing at times more than 30 people, it became one of the largest business houses in the CBD.

It was run, after Thomas, by his descendants Sam and Fred (the second generation), Reg and George (the third), Reg's son Russell and Russell's son and grandson Bruce and Darren Dimmock. Today the company is operated by Darren from Beresfield.

Freemasonry in Maitland

By Kevin Short ¹

Freemasonry is the oldest and largest of the world's fraternal organisations. For centuries, it has been written about and discussed more than any other single subject with the exception of the Bible.

What is Freemasonry?

It describes itself as a 'system of morality, veiled in allegory and illustrated by symbols' aiming for 'the brotherhood of man under the fatherhood of God'. These assertions are to some degree (if you'll pardon the pun), as vague and confusing as the elucidation. Despite the requirement that members believe 'in a supreme being' it is not a religion as it offers no tenet of salvation. Members can be adherents to any of the monotheistic faiths. The Lodge Room at Maitland represents the principal three, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, its façade

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described as 'Moorish'. Its origins too are vague but it can certainly trace a lineage to the stone-masons guilds of medieval Europe. Many make claim to descendance from the Poor Fellows of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, better known as the Knights Templar. There is considerable evidence to support this claim.

Modern or Speculative Freemasonry can accurately be dated to the formation of the United Grand Lodge of England in 1717 and its basically unchanged constitutions (rituals) to the Presbyterian minister Anderson in 1723. That said, lodges were meeting as much as 100 years prior and during the English Republic, there is significant evidence of its parallel evolution alongside the Royal Society. In fact many men held membership of both, Elias Ashmore, Joseph Banks and Isaac Newton among the best known.

Sixteen American presidents, ten Australian Prime Ministers and countless British PMs have been Freemasons. As many as four British monarchs have been members of the Craft. Edward VII was Grand Master. Masonic symbolism adorns American currency with more than half of the signatories to the Declaration of Independence claiming membership.

Many great Australian heroes were Freemasons; Don Bradman, Charles Kingsford Smith; 'Weary' Dunlop - the list goes on and on. Enumerable governors as far back as Lachlan Macquarie have been brothers, a number serving as Grand Master.

When did Freemasonry come to Australia? Freemasonry can be traced to the arrival of the First Fleet, a lodge meeting being held on the La Boussole, the flagship of the French explorer Jean François La Pérouse at Botany Bay. This meeting was attended by both French and British officers.

Captain Anthony Fenn Kemp is reputedly the first man to be initiated in New South Wales, the ceremony occurring in 1802 aboard a French ship of exploration anchored in Port Jackson. The Australian Social Lodge received its Warrant or Charter in 1820 and still meets today as Lodge Antiquity No 1.

Maitland Lodge of Unity was formed in December 1840, the 5th lodge consecrated in Australia and the first outside Sydney. It continues to meet today as Lodge Wallis Plains No 4.

What was the 'Maitland' of 1840 like and what prompted resident Freemasons to form a lodge?

W Allan Wood's classic 1972 *Dawn in the Valley: the Story of Settlement in the Hunter River Valley to 1833* gives arguably the best description of the frontier town:

"Maitland was a raw and vigorous settlement of new and old colonists; a port for small craft, a disordered camp of waterborn strangers; the land-hungry of all degrees, buyers and sellers of all commodities, enterprising breakers of new

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ground for the reaping of usurers on the make. Here was the starting point for all new settlers bound for the upper districts; a halting-place for dusty or mud-caked riders and teamsters from the inland; a long street of carousal for the road-weary, the restless, the resentful, the lawless and the despairing. It was just another place of labour for the prisoner, a scene of riotous and bloody assemblages of ticket-of-leave men and women . . . and of drunken, brawling mobs.” Maitland was not for the genteel or the faint of heart.

“Here was also a land of promise for those whose freedom was gained by servitude, and for others who voluntarily left home and kin to sail in crowded ships on unsafe seas around half the world, to plant a vine and fig tree of their own, or with an immediate prospect of food and lodging plus a yearly wage no greater than the payment of many convicts. Skilled craftsmen came here to become masters, hawkers to be merchants, inn-keepers to control many affairs of commerce and industry, and men with capital to lose all.”

“Travellers on the long High Road of Maitland were greeted from house to house by a tumult of assorted shrill whistles, shrieks, raucous laughter, jeers, . . . suggestive invitations and lewd insults . . . a lusty, bustling, rowdy, haphazard town of private enterprise arose so quickly that it possessed eight licensed public houses in High St before being officially distinguished by a name to itself.”

Following the discovery of overland routes to the Hunter, respectively by James Meehan in 1815 and John Howe in 1820, a decision was taken to move the penal settlement at Newcastle to Port Macquarie, a task more or less completed by 1824. During this transfer in 1822, Henry Dangar, the Assistant Surveyor, was instructed to survey the Valley that it be opened to general settlement. The first settlers began to arrive in 1823 and by 1825 the most sought-after alluvial lands had been allocated, usually to the multitude of well-connected and moderately wealthy veterans of the Napoleonic Wars who had arrived with capital and ‘letters of recommendation’ to Governor Brisbane.

In 1824 it was directed that an overland road between Newcastle and Wallis Plains ² be constructed. By 1825 it is believed that about 300 settlers were farming the alluvial flats in the immediate vicinity of Maitland and, in that same year, Powditch and Boucher erected a stone store, the first commercial building in Wallis Plains. Molly Morgan built the first public house, the ‘Angel Inn’ in 1826. The High Street had begun its role as the financial and commercial capital of northern New South Wales and southern Queensland.

In 1829 Governor Darling sought to purchase from Lt Edward Close at Morpeth his 2560 acre estate ‘Illulaung’, with the view to establishing a town at the head of navigation. Whilst Close was willing to sell, Darling wasn’t prepared to meet Close’s price, the consequence being that Thomas Mitchell instructed his assistant, the surveyor George Boyle White, to set out the town of ‘Maitland’ at what is today’s East Maitland. This was a deliberate attempt by the authorities to establish the township away from the ravages of the River. Floods in 1806 and 1820, whilst not having official readings, were anecdotally recorded at levels as

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high or higher than that of the famous 1955 disaster. There were recorded floods in 1826, 1827, 1830, 1831, 1832 and 1834, 1832's claiming 7 lives.

The Industrial Revolution, or more particularly paddle steamers, arrived with the "Sophia Jane" in 1831, closely followed by the locally constructed "William IV". This coincidence gave the farmers of Maitland and District an enormous commercial advantage. In the years before refrigerated transport, they were able to get perishable goods to market in Sydney overnight. By comparison it took farmers on the Hawkesbury two days to transport their goods to these same markets, effectively spoiling fresh produce. Similarly, it took two weeks each way for bullocks to reach Bathurst Plains.

The Church recognised the necessity to service the spiritual needs of the people with the establishment of the first parish outside the Cumberland basin ³ in 1834 with St Peter's at today's East Maitland. In the following six years to 1840, the Anglican Church established parishes at Stroud, West Maitland, Hinton, Raymond Terrace, Scone, Singleton, Paterson and Hexham. The Catholic and Presbyterian Churches and, a little later, the Wesleyans, similarly appointed clergymen to the region.

Even with this semblance of nicety, it needs to be remembered that the first survey of domestic allotments didn't occur in West Maitland until 1855 and even that pre-dated municipal government by nearly a decade. The High Street was a rutted, unmade dirt track, a bog when it rained, that followed the river, dodging stumps and fording small creeks as it wound its way west, populated in each direction by an unending line of bullock teams and their drays, supplying every imaginable product to the ever increasing settlers of the Valley and beyond or returning, laden with produce for market. 1840 also pre-dated the hospital, gaol and courthouse. There was no street lighting, sewage disposal, garbage collection or curbed streets. Maitland was the 'Wild West' Australia's 'Dodge City'!

By 1840 there were roughly 60 buildings fronting High St in Maitland while growth in the "government town" on the hills to the east had barely begun despite provision having been made for public buildings and open spaces, churches, schools, a cemetery and a grid network of streets. Before then, in 1834, some West Maitland people had even petitioned the governor to abandon the planned hill town and relocate the post office to the original town.

There are no population statistics for 1840 but in 1836 the combined population of East Maitland, West Maitland and Morpeth was 1,136 persons. By 1846 that number had tripled to 3,319, reflective of the district's growth and confidence. It is reasonable to assume that in 1840 it would have been somewhere in between.

It was in this environment that Freemasonry became established.

The Maitland Lodge of Unity No 804 English Constitution was consecrated on

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4th November, 1840 by the Depute Provincial Grand Master for Australia, George Robert Nichols, who proceeded to install the first Worshipful Master in Bro Philip Cohen. There were eight foundation members who subscribed £5:0:0 each. One brother is of particular interest. Robert Muir was the brother-in-law of the renowned Presbyterian firebrand, Rev John Dunmore Lang. Philip Cohen was later to become one of the leading figures in the establishment of the Great Synagogue in Sydney.

At that first meeting, the Lodge was opened in the First Degree and five candidates were initiated. One, George Furber, was later to become recognised as the founder of Maryborough on the Mary River in Queensland. An emergent meeting and December's regular meeting saw a further five initiations, bringing the membership at the end of 1840 to 18. It should be noted that at least four and probably five of those 18 were Jewish.

The Jewish connection is a most interesting one, with one, Lewis Cohen, although not a member of Unity, supplying the Lodge with Tracing Boards in 1841. On a regular basis men with obviously Jewish names such as "Wolfe", "Levy", "Cohen" and "Benjamin" were being initiated. John Goulston, who later became Grand Master, was initiated in 1894. Whilst unable to recognise many Jewish brethren because of their anglicised surnames, Old Testament given names abound throughout these formative years and, whilst not definitive, suggests a substantial Jewish presence.

The lodge met at the 'Rose Inn', located adjacent to the Port of Maitland, the licensee being the Worshipful Master. It is interesting to note that one of the first decisions of the new lodge was to ask the Rev Stack from the Church of England to preach on Freemasonry the following Sunday and that on that day the brethren walked in procession to the Church. There is no reference as to whether the Jewish brethren accompanied them. In 1845 a committee was formed to make a fresh code for the government of the Lodge. It included the Rev Stack who obviously convinced himself as a consequence of his 1840 sermon that Freemasonry was indeed a worthy organisation, an organisation fit to join!

The relationship with the Church, especially the Church of England, was generally cordial although not always. In April, 1841 Bro Nathan Macnaight, not a member of Lodge Unity but a brother Mason, was drowned in the river. The Lodge met the following day and decided a subscription list be opened and that Bro Macnaight be buried with Masonic honours. Unfortunately, their plans were thwarted by George Rusden, the Anglican priest from East Maitland who prevented them from holding a Masonic service at the graveside. The brethren returned to the lodge room following the service and opened an emergent meeting in the Third Degree. A fascinating motion was carried: "That in consequence of the improper interference of the Rev GK Rusden at the funeral of Bro Macnaight that the Worshipful Master do write to the Depute Grand Master of Australia submitting a letter for his approval detailing the circumstances and requesting the same be inserted in the Australian

newspapers at his option”.

Obviously Rusden had got under the brethren's collective skins and they petitioned the Bishop of Australia, William Grant Broughton, during a visit in 1845, presumably to censure Rusden and allow them to conduct Masonic Services at the graveside. Broughton however did not accede to their demands which subsequently saw brethren adopt the practice of conducting a Masonic Service at the brother's home before proceeding to the cemetery. It seems this chequered relationship remains with the Anglican Church to this day⁴. There is a little irony however in that an Archdeacon who followed Rusden at East Maitland, Lovick Tyrrell, the nephew of the First Bishop of Newcastle and brother to the founder of the wine dynasty, was initiated into Lodge Unity in 1888.

Masonic church services were a common occurrence, not just in Maitland but across Newcastle and the valley as lodges became established. Often they were organised and conducted by clerical brethren and were generally held in either of the Church of England, Methodist or Presbyterian churches.

The laying of the Foundation Stone of Christ Church Cathedral in Newcastle in June 1892 was a very public display of Freemasonry. The New South Wales Governor, the Earl of Jersey was Grand Master and together with 450 assembled brethren, representing lodges from across the jurisdiction, marched from Newcastle Railway Station to Cathedral Hill in full regalia, the officers of the lodges carrying their 'Working Tools' and the material requisites for the coming ceremony. The Foundation Stone was laid in Masonic tradition and was prefaced by the Grand Master who said in part “..... We are assembled here in the presence of you all, to erect a house of worship and praise of the Most High, which I pray that God may prosper as it seems good to Him. And as the first duty of Freemasons is to invoke His blessing, I call upon you to join our Grand Chaplain in an address to the Throne of Grace”.

In December 1845 the brethren of Lodge Unity were invited to “assemble at St Mary's Church (Maitland) on 26th January, 1846 where a sermon will be preached by the Rev Stack and from where brethren will walk in procession to the proposed site of the Benevolent Asylum and assist at the ceremony in laying the corner stone” The Benevolent Asylum is better known today as The Maitland Hospital.

Interestingly, the local Police Magistrate Edward Denny Day laid the stone itself. Day was famous for his capture of the perpetrators of the Myall Creek Massacre on Henry Dangar's Breeza property in 1838. I have no knowledge as to whether Day was a member of the Craft but it seems likely that he was.

In June, 1850, the Lodge made application to the Provincial Grand Lodge to lay the foundation stone of Messrs David Cohen and Company's store in West Maitland. An affiliated Past Master, Bro Major Crummer, was chosen to perform the ceremony. The building was situated next door to the Art Gallery and was

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destroyed by fire in March 1865. It now forms part of the Gallery grounds.

In 1886 Mrs Levy, the wife of Brother Levy, who was also a principal of David Cohen and Co, laid the foundation stone of the Lodge Room in Victoria Street. This ceremony was dutifully recorded, word for word, by the Maitland Mercury. This act demonstrated the still active involvement of local Jewish citizens in both the lodge and the broader community. The Jewish Synagogue in Church Street and the Lodge Room are similar buildings and were both designed by prominent local architect, John Wiltshire Pender. Pender, his son, grandson and great grandson, all architects, were similarly initiated into Lodge Unity across almost 100 years.

In the formative years, there are many instances of the application of Masonic charity. In a time before social security, there are many, many instances where collections were taken to assist brethren in distress. As mentioned earlier, it was not uncommon for the brethren to bury and give masonic honours to brethren from outside the district who had the misfortune to die locally.

Charitable acts were not restricted to funerals. An example was in 1855 when £20, a not inconsiderable amount ⁵, was donated by brethren to the Patriotic Fund, established to relieve the suffering of the wives and families of brethren who had fallen in the war against Russia in the Crimea.

Whilst Maitland Lodge of Unity was the first Lodge in the Hunter, it remained alone only until 1858 when a new lodge, the Hunter River Lodge of Harmony No 381 Scottish Constitution, was dedicated and met at the "Cross Keys" Hotel in High Street, West Maitland. The formation of Harmony probably had more to do with nationalistic pride than any real need for a second lodge. That said, the relationship between the two lodges remained cordial and in the same year when Harmony's Charter was transferred to Newcastle in 1872, the Board of Installed Masters at the Installation of Bro Dugald Dobie, an initiate of Lodge Unity, were all English Constitution Past Masters. Dobie is worthy of note. He travelled the length and breadth of the Valley and lived for Freemasonry. In 1895 Lodge Dugald Dobie No 563 was established at Newcastle in his honour and in 1925, he had the rank of 'Past Grand Master' conferred. Dobie died in 1930, having been a member of Lodge Unity for 58 years.

The transfer of Harmony's charter to Newcastle was not unique. Lodge St James No 574 Scottish Constitution, was dedicated to meet in Eaton's Hotel Muswellbrook in 1868, its charter being transferred to Wallsend in 1874.

Other lodges were established progressively across the Valley: Lodge of Hope at Murrurundi in 1865; Lodge St Andrews Singleton, also in 1865; Thistle Kilwinning at Minmi in 1877; Lodge St George in Newcastle in 1879; the Prince of Wales Lodge at Muswellbrook in 1882; St John's Lodge at The Junction in 1883; Sedgwick at Wickham in 1884 ... the list goes on and on!

On the South Maitland coalfields, a plethora of lodges emerged with the

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development of the Greta Main coal seam, the first being Lodge Excelsior at Greta. Lodge Cessnock No 252 was formed in 1907; Lodge Kurri Kurri No 253, in 1908. Later, two further lodges were consecrated at Cessnock as were Lodges Abermain and Weston, another at Kurri Kurri and at the end of the South Maitland Railway line, Lodge Paxton.

Lodge Allyn No 642, was formed at Gresford at the height of the depression in 1932 and many older brethren speak fondly of the hurricane lamp, judiciously placed on a gate-post to guide visiting brethren to the Lodge Room, the former butter factory.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that Lodge Mindaribba No 307 at Maitland, formed in 1917, was consecrated to meet away from Unity's Tuesday evening, as this coincided with the regular meetings of Maitland Council. Many aldermen and council employees became members of Mindaribba. A portrait of Rt Wor Bro Eric Brown, Past Assistant Grand Master, hangs in the lodge room. Eric was City Engineer at the time of the great 1955 flood. His successor, V Wor Bro Bob Lee (Brown's successor as city engineer) was Mindaribba's and Wallis Plain's organist for a combined 36 years. Mindaribba wasn't the first daughter lodge of Unity. Brethren from East Maitland petitioned Lodge Unity in 1894 seeking their patronage to form Lodge Orient No 215. Lodge Orient became a large lodge, boasting at its zenith in excess of 250 members. Today, lodges Orient, Allyn, Excelsior, Hiram (Dungog) and Hunter (Raymond Terrace) meet together at East Maitland as Lodge Hunter United No 252.

The politics of the different constitutions, the English, Scottish and Irish, created bitter divisions when an attempt was made to unify them under the banner of the Grand Lodge of New South Wales in 1877. In 1879 for instance, English Constitution brethren were instructed that the brethren from Lodge Braidwood were excluded as their lodge had joined the Grand Lodge of NSW. Lodge Fidelity, consecrated in 1887, was specifically formed to introduce the NSW Constitution into Newcastle. The foundation Master, Wor Bro Francis Reay, a subscribing member of Lodge Sedgwick, Scottish Constitution, was excluded from Sedgwick for being complicit in the formation of Lodge Fidelity.

Eventually, common sense prevailed and on St John's Day, 1888 the various constitutions combined to form the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. The Governor, Lord Carrington, a unifying figure, became the first Grand Master although even that was not without drama. It was discovered that on the morning of the Grand Installation, Lord Carrington was unqualified to take the role, only being a Master Mason. A hurried meeting advanced Carrington to the Installed Master's Degree and he was duly installed as Grand Master. A portrait of Lord Carrington hangs in the Victoria Street Lodge room. At this time the tidal Bullock Island, adjacent to Wickham in Newcastle, was filled with industrial waste to become today's suburb of Carrington.

With the dawn of a new century came a confidence to embrace the world as a new nation. Freemasonry, right across the jurisdiction shared this optimism and

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flourished. This was tempered by great sadness with honour rolls in lodge rooms across the Valley dedicated to soldiers of the Great War. This was duplicated following the Second World War, the aftermath of which saw a large increase in the number of masons and lodges.

Sadly, from that time to today, as with other fraternal organisations, there has been a gradual decline in numbers. Whereas others like the Grand United Order of Oddfellows (GUOOF) and the Manchester Unity (MU) have effectively ceased to exist, Freemasonry continues albeit with reduced members and fewer lodges. The question arises, has Masonry lost its *raison d'être*? Do Masons bask in glories past, ignoring the realities of an ever changing society? Despite a history extending back at least four hundred years and probably several hundred more, has Freemasonry run out of puff? Does it have a future?

Freemasonry seeks to improve men by the application of a moral ethos, using allegory and practical example to impress on candidates values with universal relevance. In one of the first charges delivered to a newly made brother, he is reminded to apportion his day so that rest and recreation shall not interfere with the legitimate occupations of life, or the claims of civil duty, or cause him to neglect the primary duty of prayer and meditation and kindly aid to brethren in need. He is warned, ever to measure time with an unswerving regard to eternity. From the moment of one's birth, each of us begins a journey that will only end with the certainty of death. What Freemasonry does is to offer good men moral support, guidance and fraternity throughout that journey.

The reasons those eight men came together at Cohen's 'Rose Inn' on 4th November, 1840 to form Maitland Lodge of Unity remain relevant and fresh.

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### Maitland Masonic Buildings

The lodge moved its meeting place regularly. The 'Waterloo Inn', the 'Fitzroy Hotel', 'Clark's Hall', the 'Australian Arms Inn' and of course 'The Rose Inn' were all at one time or another meeting places for the Lodge. An arrangement dated 3rd December, 1846 is worthy of note ... "I Charles Miller Clark do agree to let the brethren of the Maitland Lodge of Unity the use of my large room and to sufficiently light up the same with sperm candles whenever it may be required by the brethren for lodge purposes. I further agree that they also have the sole use of the ante-room on the right-hand side with the key of the said room to deposit the property of the Lodge at the annual rental of £10:0:0 payable quarterly.

As early as 1842 a Building Committee was formed but it failed to achieve its end until the construction of the Lodge Room at 280 High Street in 1877, conjointly with the Northern Building Society. The Building Society occupied the lower story, the Lodge on the upper floor. The financial arrangement with respect to this building is unknown except that the Lodge paid a peppercorn rent of one shilling. That the building was constructed with an obviously Masonic

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façade implies that the Lodge was at least part owner although the exact arrangement remains unclear. This building now houses an orthodontist, the Masonic symbolism of the façade still clearly evident.

### *280 High Street, Maitland*

This arrangement continued for ten years but was evidently not cordial and at the expiry of the lease the trustees were empowered to purchase land in Victoria Street from Major Walter Cracknell, a member of the Lodge and coincidentally, the grandfather of actress Ruth Cracknell. After the land purchase, the Sinking Fund stood at £400:0:0 and members were canvassed for subscriptions. The response was liberal with one brother donating £100, another two £50 each, 30 other brethren making smaller contributions. Local architect Bro John Wiltshire Pender was engaged, the Lodge Room being constructed by local builder Bro Henry Noad. Noad was no mug builder, being also responsible for the building of the magnificent decorated gothic Anglican Church of St Peter at East Maitland.

The Lodge Room is unique and that uniqueness has been recognised by placement on the New South Wales Heritage Register. It conforms to the perfect measurements; a double cube, twice as long as it is wide and as wide as it is high. The exterior porch is described as 'Moorish', depicting the three monotheistic religions. The front elevation is decorated with three sets of the square and compasses and the Blazing Star. High on the main wall are two smaller pillars supporting a stylised skirtwork or canopy. On the northern and southern sides of the porch are a square, level and plumb rule conjoined. The stairway consists of seven steps <sup>6</sup>, passing between two square pillars, each adorned with chapiters <sup>7</sup>, enriched with decorative design.

A feature of the interior is the dormer, admitting far more natural light during daylight hours than would be admitted by windows with the same glass area situated in the walls.

The frieze at the ceiling-line consists of shield-shaped castings each impressed with a five pointed star to remind us of the tessellated pavement and the five points of fellowship. Halfway down the walls are a series of double squares forming an eight-pointed star, in the centre of which is a stylised rose, a Masonic symbol. The other decoration on the wall is rectangular ventilators connected to vertical shafts that bring fresh air into the room, the foul air rising and being exuded through the dormer. These ventilators are also twice as long as they are wide. The piers on the wall symbolise the columns supporting the beams and roof of an ancient temple.

The original cedar pedestals of the Master and Wardens were painted white. The Master's pedestal depicted the Ionic column of Wisdom with the sun rising over the horizon. The Senior Warden's pedestal depicted a Doric Column with a setting sun, the Junior Warden's displaying the Corinthian column of beauty, with the sun at its zenith or High-Time. These pedestals unfortunately fell into disrepair and were replaced by the present ones, the gift of Lodge Mindaribba

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

on the 150th Anniversary of Lodge Unity.

1. Kevin Short is an active Freemason. He is the highest ranked member in the Lower Hunter, his rank being Past Assistant Grand Master (PAGM)
2. The name 'Wallis Plains' was conferred on the area now known as 'Maitland' in 1818 by Bro Lachlan Macquarie during a vice-regal visit. It was so named after the commandant at Newcastle, Cpt James Wallis.
3. The 'Cumberland' basin is the county name for the area in which Sydney is geographically located. Newcastle and Maitland are in the county of 'Northumberland'. On the northern side of the Hunter river the two counties are Gloucester and Durham.
4. I was once told by a senior Anglican clergyman that being a Freemason was a prerequisite to becoming Dean of Canterbury Cathedral. At least four Archbishops of Canterbury have been Freemasons and as mentioned earlier, Edward VII, the head of the Anglican Church was Grand Master of English Freemasonry. Despite this, some Anglican clergy remain opposed to Freemasonry. Sydney diocese for example sees Freemasonry as the Devil incarnate while the Bishop of North Queensland is an active Mason.
5. A currency convertor values £20 in 1855 at \$1,406 in today's currency.
6. The number '7' has specific significance and is referred to as 'the perfect number'.
7. A 'chapter' is the collar on a decorative column.