

*Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

# **Bulletin of Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.**

(Established March 1977)

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



**Focussing on Us**

**Celebrating the Society's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

**Volume 24, Number 1**

**February 2017**

*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 photograph was taken by Peter Smith and shows president Keith Cockburn in the Society's rooms with the Folmer 1890s large bellows portrait camera.

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

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

**Business meeting** is held on the third Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7.00pm

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

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

**Patrons:** The Hon. Milton Morris AO  
NSW Member for Maitland 1956-1980  
NSW Minister for Transport 1965 – 1975  
The Most Reverend Bill Wright, Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

### **Current Office Bearers :**

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**Bulletin contributions** are being sought. Please contact the Society via email [maitlandhistorical@gmail.com](mailto:maitlandhistorical@gmail.com)

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## **The Historical Society's Christmas Picnic**

The following photograph was taken at the 2016 Christmas picnic at "Holbeach" in Lochinvar. The weather was pleasant and Arthur the cockatoo refrained from biting anyone.



## **The Society's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

This year marks forty years since a group of enthusiastic area residents united to form the Maitland and District Historical Society. The group initially met at the old Maitland Library building, and the first Bulletin was produced in June 1977 by June Vile, who was also the Society's first president.

As she remarked in that first Bulletin "Many members have spent years in slow detective work finding out many, perhaps unrelated, facts. We expect it will take a while to put together, but we should eventually have a coherent and continuing history of this district."

In other words, it was anticipated that the Maitland and District Historical Society would not only provide a spiritual "home" for local historians, but also function as a clearing-house that would enable the rich history of the area to be documented.

In the Society's first year alone (as *per* **Bulletin Vol. 2, no.1**) the following items and research compilations were placed in the Society files by members:

- |                    |   |
|--------------------|---|
| Kath Macmillan     | 125 years of Bolwarra Public School   |
| Judith Hawks       | Tour of historic Maitland buildings   |
| Roy & Val Hamson   | Ratebook of West Maitland 1878  |
| Jackie Youldon     | Alphabetical list of occupants from 1878 Ratebook.<br>Alphabetical list of names on Columbarium, St Mary's Church, Maitland, at 1.2.1978. |
| Nancy Eckert & Son | Occupants & owners of business premises from ratebook 1878  |
| Bill Fitzpatrick   | Scrapbook of newspaper clippings collected over many years and other clippings to be filed.   |

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

Judith Smith Our letter writer, has acquired valuable information on the Maitland banks and District Post Offices.

Edith Pearce Copy of her address given on 4/7/1977 "East Maitland 1828-1850"

The following excerpt from an index of Society Bulletins, which has been compiled by Judy Nicholson the previous Bulletin editor, indicates the broad interests of the early members.

**Subject, Author/Submitter, Vol. , No., Month, Year**

Bolwarra School, Kathleen Macmillan, 3, Sept, 1977

Glebe Cemetery , 3, Sept, 1977

Hunter River Agricultural & Horticultural Association, 2, 1, Feb, 1978

Hunter River Agricultural & Horticultural Association, 2, 2, Apr, 1978

Green Hills (Morpeth), Sophia Jane, 2, 2, Apr, 1978

Major Crummer, by Ron Montague, 2, 2, Apr, 1978

Prisoner flogging, Morpeth Times Feb 18, 1884, 2, 2, Apr, 1978

Old Maitland, by V.J. Goold, part 1, 2, 2, Apr, 1978

Old Maitland, by V.J. Goold, part 2, 2, 3, Jun-Jul, 1978

Youngs of Umbercollie, by Alison E. Tonge, 2, 3, Jun-Jul, 1978

William Hall, soldier and pioneer, by Ron Montague, 2, 4, Aug, 1978

East Maitland, 1828-1850, by Edith Pearce, 2, 4, Aug, 1978

Oakhampton history, by Warwick Berthold, part 1, 2, 5, Nov, 1978

Maitland Girls High School, by Elsie Henston, 2, 5, Nov, 1978

Oakhampton history, by Warwick Berthold, part 2, 3, 1, Apr, 1979

Cricket, 3, 1, Apr, 1979

St. James' Church, Morpeth, 3, 1, Apr, 1979

Sherberras, memorial in St. James Ch., by Ron Montague, 3, 2, Sep, 1979

Sesqui-centenary, 'A town to be laid out', 3, 2, Sep, 1979

All around the town', Maitland hotels, part 1, 3, 2, Sep, 1979

All around the town', Maitland hotels, part 1, 3, 3, Nov, 1979

West Maitland - Town & Country Jnl 16 Dec 1871, part 1, 3, 3, Nov, 1979

A reading of the early Bulletins and other documents indicates that the Society also acted, when necessary, as an advocate for the protection of Maitland's heritage. The possibility of a museum was also mooted early on.

In celebration of the Society's fortieth anniversary, this year's quarterly Bulletins will feature selected articles which have appeared in previous Bulletins. The intent is to highlight the Society's many achievements in rediscovering and documenting the history of Maitland and its surrounding district. Unfortunately, few members today are aware of the valuable research which was accomplished by the Society in its earliest years. By revisiting early Bulletin articles we hope to rectify this.

More generally, however, we want to celebrate forty years of discovering, recording, preserving, advising on, and teaching the history of Maitland and the district. Vivat!

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The Historical Society early on initiated the practice of having, when possible, an expert speaker during its meetings. The very first address was delivered by well-known educator Miss Edith Pearce on 4 July 1977. Member Allan Thomas has digitised that presentation from the Society's typed version of Miss Pearce's address.

**"EAST MAITLAND 1828-1850" by Miss Edith Pearce**

Many of the incidents I am about to relate were told to me by early settlers, one of whom was born in Banks St the year Queen Victoria came to the throne. She was well in her nineties when she died. Strange were the tales she told of the early settlers, free or bond; the humble and the haughty; the blacks, transport and the social life, all the phases that made up the daily life of the community.

I shall not go back into the very beginnings of the settlement, but the period from 1828 to 1850. By 1830, Maitland was booming. It was the second-largest town in the colony. Five roads converged on it from the interior.

It was the bullock teams that marked out High St. The first mention of bullocks was about 1826 when Samuel Clift rode two bullocks from Sydney.

The teams with their heavily loaded drays of wool, wheat, hides, tallow, potatoes, Wollombi wool (wattle bark) and tobacco came in from the north and west. Bypassing swamps and waterholes, they made their way to Green Hills, the navigable head of the river, where they unloaded their produce to be shipped to Sydney.

On the return journey, there being a plentiful supply of water and swamp grass, they camped on the river bank where Maitland now stands. The town grew and prospered. The teamsters loaded their year's supply of tea, flour, molasses, sugar, Manchester, clothing, everything that was needed for man and beast on the stations in the hinterland.

No one knows why the town was called Maitland. Maybe it was in honour of Sir Frederick Maitland, Captain of the "Bellerophon", the ship that took Napoleon Bonaparte to exile on St Helena. Many veterans of the Napoleonic Wars were settled in the area. Perhaps it was the choice of Surveyor Sir Thomas Mitchell.

In 1828 it was decided that the east, being flood-free, was the most suitable site for the government town. Following Governor Darling's approval, Surveyor White was instructed to survey the area. The streets were to be wide and parallel. Their very names are synonymous of the times:- Melbourne, Banks, William, King, George, High and, later Victoria and Brunswick. High St, as in most English towns, was to be the main street.

Apart from Melbourne St, East Maitland grew into the residential quarter, lack of water being the drawback. If residents hadn't a well, they bought water at one shilling per cask from Farrell, the water carrier.

In 1831, the land in Banks St was sold, mostly in one acre lots. Large allotments were necessary, as people needed land for a cow, a horse or two, a small orchard and a vegetable garden. The houses were built of stone and hand-made convict bricks. Very few of the original buildings remain.

Let us begin by travelling east along the highway from Victoria Bridge.

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Still standing is a small cottage covered with vines, the oldest house in Maitland. It was built by Samuel Clift. It comprises a ground floor and a loft with a trapdoor. The loft was the sleeping quarters. At night the ladder was drawn up into the loft, a precaution necessary because of blacks.

Next to it the Bridge House and Walli House, also built by Samuel Clift at a later date.

Travelling along, we come to the Black Horse Inn, built in 1837. It was in the inn's paddocks that special events were celebrated, the roasting of an ox, horse racing, ploughing competitions and sports in general.

In 1843, Mr Hanks built his shops and residence. In one shop he carried on his trade as a bootmaker. The other was occupied by Mr McPherson, tailor.

On the other side of the road where Earp Woodcock and Beveridge have their building was Gentleman Smith's mill and home. Portion of the mill is still in use. To many it will come as a surprise to know that wheat was grown extensively in our valley, but rust came and wiped it out forever.

Situated behind the mill is an old stone cottage – Maitland's first hospital and benevolent home. It was also used by Caroline Chisolm as a home for her immigrant girls.

On the next corner is a row of four shops, originally the police barracks but later Dewar's store. Mr Dewar was a Scot, one of the famous whisky family. The building on the opposite corner was once the Union Inn – 1827. Here the first courts were held. Apart from administering justice and providing rest for the weary traveller, it was used for divine service.

The building directly diagonal, now owned by Fry Bros., was the Bank of Australia. The plastered dados on the inside walls are a work of art, the handicraft of a free Irish immigrant, Donnelly by name. He was paid ten pence a yard for the dado and eight pence a square yard for the wall plastering.

Along Melbourne Street we now wend our way, past the old shops and the George and Dragon Hotel, built in 1837, the licence of which has been transferred to a new hotel by the same name at Green Hills. The building on the Lawes Street corner was Banfield's store, the upper floor was a ballroom.

The rest of the town was mainly residential and still is. In Banks Street, facing Wallis Street, is Old Government Cottage. When Governor Macquarie visited the area in 1818 he described the cottage, which Major Morisset named "Lachlan Cottage" in honour of the Governor's son, as a neat building situated on the summit of a hill overlooking a freshwater lagoon and a wide creek, which he named Wallis Creek, and having a commanding view of the farms on Wallis Plains.

The three-storeyed house owned by James Brunker has recently been restored by Mr. and Mrs. Trent. Brunker owned a butcher's shop on the corner of Banks Street and Newcastle Road. He entered Parliament and became Minister for Lands in Parke's government. In this section is St Peter's Parish Hall, 1835, originally the Church of England Denominational School.

Across the street is an old convict-built coachhouse and stables, 1833. When purchased by my parents, it housed an elaborate coach, a phaeton, tins of rusty and bent convict nails, pots of dripping and enough arsenic to poison the whole town. Nails in the early days were scarce and hard to come by. They were hand-made by convict women at the Parramatta Female Factory. The dripping, with caustic soda and ash, was made into soap. Heaven alone knows what the arsenic was used for.

It is hard for us to understand conditions in those days. Take footwear. We go into a shop and buy what we require. Then, if country women's boots wore out, they went barefooted until the teams went through to Maitland. On arrival they were re-shod by Mr Hanks.

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Crossing Newcastle Road, we come to the park, which was once the cattle markets. Opposite is Rielly's (now spelt Riley's) hotel, being restored by Mrs Hure. Next is the Eckford home built in 1833 by Lieutenant William Eckford, retired harbour master, the father of John, Maitland's first free settler.

On the Lawes Street corner is a building, now owned by Maitland City Council, which was Sam Bailey's "Cottage of Content" Inn. Opposite, Sam Clift had his butcher's shop and facing Day Street is "Roseneath", originally the "Victoria Hotel" owned by the same Samuel Clift. On the other side of the road, recently restored, is "The Overflow", so called because it was used to accommodate extra guests from the hotel.

Little else remains. There is the old school house of St Joseph's convent in King Street and on the Morpeth Road a split-level house which was Eckford's Hotel, "The Woolsack".

As you study the history of Maitland you will find the name of Clift is very prominent. Samuel Clift was born in 1800. He arrived in the colony in 1818 on the convict transport "Neptune" according to the census of 1828. Clift was a hard-working man married to a free woman, Anne Duff. He had by then acquired sixty acres of land on Wallis Plains; he was the proud owner of 100 and sixty cattle and three children.

Clift was making money fast, mustering cattle in the hills, adopting the motto "finders keepers". Nice little mobs were sold at the cattle markets.

In 1831 he employed a ticket-of-leave man, Ben Hall. Ben had been transported for seven years, his crime the theft of a handkerchief valued at ninepence. When freed by servitude, he married a convict girl from the Parramatta factory. Their son, Ben Hall, bushranger, was born at Wallis Creek.

As time went by, Samuel Clift and his family of five sons and three daughters became influential pastoralists. They owned large stations on Breeza and Liverpool plains. They were prominent in commerce, industry, mining and shipping. They took a great interest, not only in their own church, St Peter's, to which they gave lavishly, but in all denominations.

Hats off to this worthy pioneer, who rose above adversity. It was men and women of the courage and tenacity displayed by this man who laid the foundations of our nation.

Let us now turn to the churches. All the original buildings have gone, replaced by larger and modern ones.

There was St Stephen's Presbyterian Church in Furber Street, St Peter's Church of England, 1838, on the corner of William Street and Newcastle Road, the Methodist Church opposite on the same site it occupies today, the Free Kirk at the end of William Street and St Joseph's Roman Catholic Church on the ground where the new church now stands. The foundation stone of St Joseph's was laid by Father John Joseph Terry in 1830. This establishes its claim to be the oldest Catholic Church in Australia.

During the "Great Hunger" 1845-47 when the Irish potato crop failed, the Irish settlers contributed one pound per head to bring their kinsmen to this country. Many settled in the Maitland district and father Terry's flock was greatly increased.

The priest was renowned for his treatment of insobriety. His word was law. He was omnipotent. One of his parishioners laughingly told me the following story:- One of the Irishwomen complained to the priest about her husband's drinking habits. Father Terry threatened him that if he did not mend his ways he would have him turned into a rat and the cat would eat him. One Saturday demon drink won. He staggered home and begged his wife to lock up the cat. For years after, this was a great joke with his currency-born sons.

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The convicts were encamped on Stockade Hill. The gallows and whipping post stood opposite St. Joseph's Church. On one day alone, Father Terry gave the last rites to three prisoners. One-third of the convicts transported were Irish. Many of them were political prisoners, rebels against England's harsh treatment.

Convicts were engaged in building construction and making roads. Others were assigned to landholders. The avenue of trees in William Street was planted by the road gang.

The following is an abstract from the reminiscences of the late Thomas Pryor, who died in 1915. It illustrates the treatment of the convicts.

"I was born in Hertfordshire, England, on 21<sup>st</sup> December 1825. A rural worker's wage was seven and sixpence per week. Our family and another family of friends decided to emigrate. After a six months voyage we dropped anchor at Port Jackson, May 18, 1838. My father entered us into engagement with the late William Charles Wentworth, as shepherds on his property, Lambs Valley, Hunter River. We came by steam packet to Green Hills. We were then conveyed by bullock dray to our destination. On our way through East Maitland we were surprised to see a row of handcarts loaded with stones and gravel. They were drawn by men harnessed in chains and guarded by soldiers. Others were wearing leg irons, repairing the road. This, we were told, was the iron gang and that was one mode of punishment awarded to criminals."

I remember crossing a rickety wooden bridge and seeing a straddle of yellow maize at the rear of Mr Clift's house. This was the first we had ever seen."

Most of our history has been lost with the neglect and destruction of our old cemeteries. Fortunately, in Hilland Crescent, some headstones of outstanding value are still intact. That of Michael Ryan, convict, tells its own sad story. Here also is the family grave of John Brown, the discoverer of coal at Four Mile Creek.

In the old Glebe Cemetery at Lochend is the Eckford family vault, the Clift vault and the tombstone of Edward Denny Day, the police magistrate who was instrumental in capturing the bushrangers, the Jewboy Gang, at Doughboy Hollow.

All the stones bear the birthplaces of the departed – native of Gloucestershire, Kent, Devon, Cornwall, Kerry, Cork, Belfast and Dublin, Aberdeen and Inverness, thus showing the origin of the city's forebears.

The descendants of the early pioneers are dispersed throughout the world. There are still Eckfords in the town; those of Gentleman Smith went to Fullerton Cove, Paris and South America and the stones from his convict-built residence on Newcastle Road are now the Banks Street fence of St Peter's Church – 1947.

In mentioning St. Peter's Church, it is here we have East Maitland's greatest tourist attraction. One finds here a rare and costly Carrara marble pulpit given by the Eckford family, stained glass windows of great beauty equal to any to be found in old European cities, the sanctuary with communion rail and altar, the eagle lectern, the beautiful organ, the font and many other priceless treasures given in memory of those stalwart pioneers and left as a heritage to those who follow after.

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The following report is taken from **Bulletin no. 3** (Sept 1977) and was by June Vile.

I shall read some recollections of Mr. Wally Graham (aged 81) of Largs, who spent all his working life at McGovern & Ribee, tailors and mercers, in High Street, Maitland. I spent two hours with him today (13<sup>th</sup> Sept.) and took down in a combination of shorthand and longhand his memories of his first job, cleaning the windows and polishing the brass strips surrounding the windows and the name of the firm in brass underneath them; of the 20 girls who made the vests and trousers and the 12 coat hands who “made on the knee”; of late shopping nights on Fridays, when thousands thronged High Street and the gas lamps were lit; of Sam Turner (after whom Turner Park was named), whose wife was a lovely woman (Sam was quite a character!); of the shops and their owners on the south side of High Street between Church and Elgin Streets, and the dashing Dr. King with his rubber-tyred sulky, varnished yellow. And much more.

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From **Bulletin Vol. 2, no.5** (November, 1978) is a “History of Oakhampton” (part 1) by Warwick Berthold, who was only in year 10 at that time.

The history of Oakhampton is extremely vague. Lack of records, deaths of old people, time and floods have all contributed to make the history of Oakhampton mostly unknown to us in this modern age. Therefore in several parts, information and/or dates, are lacking, but a general picture is obtainable.

Oakhampton has its origins back in the year of 1822 when one thousand acres was given as a grant to William B. Wilkinson who named the property Okehampton Park Estate. The name and spelling came from Devonshire, England. Later it was respelt – Oakhampton. Wilkinson sold his land to Captain Robert Lethbridge, who occupied his acquisition about 1823. His house (possibly a slab hut, replaced at a later date by a more durable stone and slate dwelling) was constructed on the summit of the highest hill in Oakhampton, from where he could see all of his domain, as well as, a clear view of the fast-growing township of West Maitland.

The house standing on that same hill today is the oldest in Oakhampton, but even so, it is not possible now to determine whether it is the original house or not. A woman who resided there for several years told me of once finding several large stones which were all that remained of the original dwelling. On investigating the matter myself, I found that two bricks of obvious age were all that remained. Speculation is all that is possible on this certain incident.

In 1833 Lethbridge still resided at his abode. Reputed to be one of the best houses on the Hunter River in those times, it was built partly of stone and had a slate roof. The house on Oakhampton Hill fits this description exactly, except that it is not really large or excelling in grandeur. The one thousand acres comprising Oakhampton was subdivided about 1840 into 81 lots, each consisting of about twelve acres. Owing to the natural boundary formed by the Hunter River as well as Walka Lagoon, these lots were of various differing shapes and sizes. It was when these blocks were made available that such names as Logan, Willard, Scobie, and Young appeared in Oakhampton. These men and their families were the pioneers of Oakhampton. They settled on their farms and tilled the soil to earn their living. No doubt they lived in simple slab huts before they constructed their solid stone or timber houses.

Only one slab hut remains in Oakhampton today, and information I’ve gathered indicates that it was built by Houston Mitchell, but once again it is impossible to determine exactly. From where this slab hut is standing it is possible to locate the site of the more imposing residence, built of stone and slate. Still standing nearby is an ancient brick and slate dairy and a barn of comparable age. In what would have been the back yard of the house there is a small stone drinking trough! The slab hut is

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now used as a shed, and contains some remains of the bigger house; two fireplaces of immense dimensions and several stained glass windows also of similar proportions.

In 1849 the Methodist Church purchased some land for burial purposes for the sum of £40. Many people from Oakhampton as well as East and West Maitland and Morpeth were laid to rest there. Vaults are present, but they have been filled in by floods. . One vault was excavated recently, and the brickwork of the stairway and interior was of extreme age. Many fine headstones are in this Wesleyan Cemetery, forgotten by most people, they will be remembered once again, when the restoration work is completed.

The population soared from 1840 to 1880, and it was about this time that Oakhampton's reputation as a beautiful area started. The district was given the nickname of "The Garden Suburb".

In 1877 the people of Oakhampton banded together to obtain a provisional school. This meant that at least fifteen children would attend and no more than twenty-five, enough to warrant a public school. The parents paid for the furniture, and provided a building. The provisional school was first built on the corner of Lot 14. When it was washed away in a flood a building higher up was then used. Part of the house was remodelled for use as a classroom and the rest was provided for the resident teacher. In 1879 the school became a public school and the Department of Education took over the financial aspects of the school.

The school consists of two sections, the classroom and the connected teacher's residence, including a bathroom and a kitchen in the rear of the house. The school is built with brick on stone foundations. The original slate roof has been replaced with galvanised iron.

On 26 June, 1877 William Clarke, a distinguished British Civil Engineer, arrived in Australia to examine the problem of providing for an efficient water supply for Maitland and Newcastle. Clarke examined several proposed sites for the future pumping station and discarded them for several reasons. He finally selected a site at Oakhampton. The intake was to be at Dickson's Falls (Oakhampton) , the pumping station was to be erected on a site known locally as "Scobie's Garden and Vineyard" at an estimated price of £170,000.

After various forms of political changes and upheavals, the station was finally completed and on January 1<sup>st</sup> 1887 Newcastle's population cheered as the slightly discoloured water from Walka arrived for the first time.

Walka Water Works consisted of an ornate brick structure, housing the pumps and boilers, a small structure in the river from where the water was taken, a huge settling tank, a clear water tank, and a huge lagoon with a stone wall and specially mixed clay covering the bottom.

Also adjacent to the station but further uphill, was located five cottages for the use of the workers at Walka and their families [and] a huge stone house for the Resident Engineer; all six of these houses were built of stone and slate.

The main structure is built of pink and cream bricks and the walls are four feet thick. The slate roof has been replaced with more modern galvanised iron. The pumphouse was extended and slightly altered around the turn of the century. Despite this, the Victorian architecture still shows its elegance and finery.

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Also from **Bulletin Vol. 2, no.5** (November, 1978)

Miss Elsie Henston, retired principal of Petersham Intermediate Girls' High School, wrote of these "glories of the past" thus –

Reminiscences of Maitland Girls' High School from 1898 – 1900

The school consisted of from 50 to 60 girls, many of whom were "paying pupils", admitted on the results of a simple entrance examination, and who paid two guineas a term. Others were admitted on results of a competitive examination (English, History, Arithmetic, French, Dictation), held twice

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yearly. About 20 were admitted each year. The “Scholars” received all textbooks free, the “Bursars” a monetary allowance as well, to assist in payment of board at certain recommended homes. These girls came from places as far north as Glenn Innes.

As the girls from Newcastle, East Maitland, and Morpeth arrived by train about 8.00 am, and the Singleton girls at 8.10 am, School began at 8.30. Lunch recess was 30 minutes and School ended at 2.00 pm, to enable girls to catch the only available trains for home. Classes were taught in the “new” room, and the back room of the residence.

The members of the staff were: Mistress, Miss J. Grossman, beloved and revered by all of us; Miss Muir (Mrs. Redshaw) who was succeeded by the much-loved Miss Emily Cruise; and Miss Elizabeth Mitchell. Visiting teachers were Professor King for music, Mr. Hollings for drawing, and Miss Julie White for needlework.

About three times yearly we had “Drill” conducted by Major Mulholland. This consisted of marching round and round the verandah – the daring ones dropping off the end of the verandah one by one, and retiring to the stables until the business ended.

There was no attempt at making a playground – the grounds were nearly always knee deep in grass. Lunch was partaken on the verandah – though a certain select group patronised an old fowlhouse, sitting on the perches. Another favourite haunt was an old stable behind the new room. There was no organised sport nor time to play if there had been, but there always seemed to be a gaiety and friendliness never forgotten by those who were fortunate to share in its life.

Miss Grossman lived in the residence with her mother and sister. This, I am sure, helped to stamp the School more thoroughly with her spirit and influence.

It was during those years that the School first adopted a hat band – navy with two pale blue stripes, and a gold shield with the motto “Labor Omnia Vincit”. This was worn on a flat sailor hat.

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From **Bulletin Vol 4, no. 3** (November, 1979)

*A Special Request from One of Our Members*

17 October, 1979

Dear Members, On 7-8 February, 1980, a conference will be held at the University of Melbourne in preparation for the 1838 volume of the bicentennial project, Australia 1788-1988.

I am proposing for this volume an essay on the Police Magistrates in New South Wales, with some particular reference to Edward Denny Day in Maitland and Muswellbrook and any information and guidance about sources will be most appreciated. ...

I am very anxious to involve historians, local historical societies, museums and collections in the Hunter Region and individuals from the Hunter Region in this national project which should do more than reflect a few historians from Sydney, Melbourne, and Canberra.

Yours sincerely,  
L.E. Fredman  
Dept. Of History  
University of Newcastle

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From **Bulletins Vol 4, nos 5 and 6**, (July, August 1980)

A Recollection of Early Homeville and Telarah, and Recollections of Historical Interest, by Mr. Leslie Pitcairn J.P.

This is my recollection of early Homeville and Telarah 74 years ago and concerning mines from Denton Park and East Greta.

Starting from South Street, where I live, 74 years ago it was called Government Road. There were six homes there then. In the next street, then called Station Street, now Brook Street, and along Blyth Street, were ten miners' cottages, the Homeville School, a small church and a butcher's shop and residence; down Brook Street a stone cottage and on the next corner the Homeville Hotel and further on four cottages leading down to the railway and across the line was the Maitland coal mine. The mine had a shaft eighteen feet in diameter and was 500 feet deep. My father was the engineer and winding engine driver. This mine was flooded in the 1893 flood. The Joint Stock Bank went broke that year and caused the mine to close as their money was in this bank.

The Homeville Hotel was then known as the Caladonian Hotel. It was built around 1888. They used to have quoit competitions, Kangaroo rat racing and hack racing. Large crowds would gather on these days and a large tent was pitched on the Homeville Cup day and catering was supplied for the public. Privately owned in later years it has now been demolished.

The Maitland Mine Manager was Mr. Charles Dixon. Undermanager was Mr. John Gibson, Engineer Mr. Andrew Pitcairn, Pit carpenter Mr. Rudolf St. Vincent Hayes. Mr. Wall Dixon of Trevor St. Telarah is the youngest son of the mines manager.

The Main Road divided Homeville and Telarah and at Telarah there [were] only about six houses belonging to Mr. Frank Edwards, Mr. Jack Curran, Mr. Edmond Pont, Mr. James New, Mr. James New Junior and Mr. Fred Pont. In Trevor Street, Telarah stood Telarah House. Built by convicts, it was the residence of Captain Telarah. He and his family are buried at Campbell's Hill cemetery.

A Mr. Rafferty of Bonar Street used to graze sheep on the Telarah Hills. I used to talk to the shepherd. He used to take the sheep back to the Pen Paddock about 4 o'clock every day.

After Maitland Mine was closed down, my father was given the job of Engineer at East Greta. This pit was just down to the coal and had a 75 degree shaft, sloping down to 100 feet. After 40 years it was down to 2,000 feet, covering about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile; there were three tunnels No. 2 steam gig and top seam, fitted with a winding engine. Father was there from start to finish, the mine shutting down in 1930.

I worked at the East Greta work shops at the age of 14  $\frac{1}{2}$  years. I was well familiar with mine workings and their engines as my father had previously taken me around with him at week ends when he was called in to inspect the engines and ropes for hauling and safety working. So when I went there to work I was training to become an engineer. My dad took great interest in teaching me and Saturdays and Sunday nights were spent studying his

engineering books. This was a great help when I went to tech at Maitland under Mr. Phillmer at the age of 16 years.

Unfortunately my eyesight failed and I was unable to be passed but I still kept on and at 19 years of age I passed with first class honours as mines engineer. But I was not able to drive to wind men from the pit and was advised to try for something else. This I did and took up cabinet making. Having a knowledge of machinery I was able to braze the band saw blades.

I attended wood working at Maitland under the guidance of Mr. Jim Knode. I was able to draw plans, shapes and angles and make a success of cabinet and casket work. At the age of 21 I went to work at Mackies at Newcastle as cabinet maker and machinist and was there nearly five years. When Walsh Island closed in 1921 Newcastle trade suffered and men were laid off including 20 unmarried men from Mackies for at least 3 months. But I decided to work for myself making folding clothes horses and mantel pieces for £3-10-0. Then orders came in for bedroom and dining room suites, chairs and kitchen dressers £80-10-0 for the lot.

I then installed a 2 H.P. kerosene engine, a 10 inch saw bench, boring machine, squaring off saw bench and zig saw and wood lathe. One month after delivery of a bedroom suite to Mr. Arthur Howarth I was asked to quote a price for bank fittings at the C.B.C. Bank at Cessnock. My price of £400 was accepted and from then on other jobs rolled in, such as shop fittings for Mr. Andrew. That job was finished the Saturday the Bellbird mine disaster happened. I also fitted D'Argivals mens wear store, Mr. Letts mens wear which are still there.

I supplied whip handles for the sadlers shop and mantel pieces for Gould Bros and Earp Woodcocks. When the new Catholic Church was built in 1954 I carved the memorial figures and lettering for the memorial chapel, also the pulpit in the main building. Also at St. Luke's in Telarah the Pulpit, Altar, Lectern, Reading desk and Pews.

In Kurri I fitted out Westons new shop with counters, shelves, and office fittings, a large glass case for the Co-op Store, dozens of pine tables at 30/- each, pine meat safes with gauze wire £1 each, double wooden beds ranging from £3 to £5 each.

Now back to the mines. Denton Park was run by Mr. Russell. He also had the bone mill as a side line. The bones were crushed and sent away for fertiliser. He had a railway line from Denton Park to Farley railway line, passing over the New England Highway and through where Lintotts Nursery now stands. The line was taken up after World War I, about 1918.

Across from Denton Park was the Spread Eagle Hotel, situated where the Golden Fleece Service Station now stands. Dr. Walker had two tunnels running under what is now the Rutherford Shopping Centre and the Bowling Green. I had the contract to move a boiler and engine from Marriott's Mine at Louth Park to one of the tunnels for a Mr. Alexander in 1931. This mine was worked for about three to four years.

*To be continued in the next Bulletin...*

## **The History of the Maitland and District Garden Club**

This year another local organisation is celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary – that is, the Maitland and District Garden Club. The following article has been written by Terry Hughes, the Garden Club's Newsletter editor.

***On March 25, Maitland Garden Club celebrates its 50th year of existence. It was not the first, but it is the longest continuous existing garden club in the Hunter Region.***

There are no existing members who were foundation members back in 1967, but we still have some local residents who remember how things began. One is Barbara Horn of Lorn. She says that a few keen gardeners in the Maitland district met informally to swap gardening ideas. She said the club was the brainchild of Lorna Hopson, who asked the young Barbara to help her create and distribute a notice to gardeners in Lorn and Maitland to test the response from the rest of the community. As a young newly married potential member she offered to roneo off and deliver flyers (no photocopiers in those days) asking interested people to come along to discuss the formation of a garden club in Maitland. To their surprise about 30 very interested people turned up to hear representatives of Cessnock Horticultural Bureau and Millfield Garden Club (both clubs no longer in existence) outline how their clubs functioned. They stressed that to succeed, meetings need to be friendly occasions with sharing of ideas. An advisory committee was set up to call the first meeting of Maitland and District Garden Club as they voted to name it.

More roneoed notices were distributed around town advertising the first meeting of the new club on March 17, 1967 at 7.30 pm in the old Maitland Library Activities room opposite the Town Hall. It struck a chord in the community with forty people turning up at the first meeting. The first executive was elected with well-known gardening enthusiasts such as Mr. & Mrs Alan Hopson, Mr. G. Kembry, and Mr & Mrs Richard Ribee voted in to lead the club in its formative years.

The structure of the monthly meetings held on the last Friday night of the month with Guest Speaker (presented with a cake), Show Bench display of flowers and arrangements brought by members, plus a raffle with prize supplied by members still survives to this day. There is also an In Your Garden segment for members to discuss gardening problems and find solutions in a co-operative way. For the record, the first guest speaker was local nurseryman, Mr. Lintott, with advice on growing shrubs plus donating a shrub to be raffled.

By August, with the stairs a problem, the club meetings moved to the CWA Hall (later demolished to make way for a shopping complex) and then to a renamed CWA Hall in Church Street, Maitland where they remained for many years. The latest move was not until the beginning of 2010 when meetings transferred to the Masonic Hall in Grant St. near the Town Hall.

Over the years the club has been involved in many activities besides the meetings.

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

Weekend coach trips to district nurseries were a regular feature with the luggage compartment stacked with purchases on the return journey. We visited plant shows and open garden properties. We visited other clubs and hosted visiting clubs from around the state. We organised flower shows, assisted charity fetes such as Mai-Wel and Benhome, planted trees and shrubs in community parks, organised working bees at elderly members' gardens, donated gardening books and magazines to Maitland Library to name a few activities at random.

One major effort was for the Bi-centennial year in 1988. Working with the Heritage Park committee, we planted a huge number of trees around the cliff face and clumps throughout the park. Most people don't realise the effort it took to create the natural-looking tree-lined park they see today (see the following photographs of the task).



## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

There have been a few changes over the years. Saturday afternoon meetings were introduced for the three winter months. We joined the Garden Clubs of Australia in 1982 to get the benefits of belonging to a national body from which to get advice and comprehensive insurance for our activities. Our President, Geoff Hicks is currently the Garden Clubs of Australia Organiser for Hunter South Zone. In February each year some of us assist long-time member Adele Cockburn, who has been Chief Steward of Horticulture at the Maitland Show for the last thirty years.

In 1999, new member Terry Hughes produced the first edition of a club newsletter which someone cheekily suggested be called "Digging Dirt" and it still appears each month. In the last decade, Geoff Hicks agreed to write a full-page article for the *Maitland Mercury* on gardening topics which appears now each Wednesday. No fee: he saw this as a chance to make the public aware that we existed and hopefully attract new members.

### ***So what of the future of our club?***

Garden clubs are not so necessary now in providing information about growing things. Click on to the internet and you can find many pages of advice on any gardening topic. We know this as our large library of books and collection of videotapes never gets touched these days. Modern couples often both work or have young children to look after which makes going out at night difficult. (Though Geoff and Judy Hicks recount how they attended meetings in their early days with children in carry baskets – they were keen). Also we found how difficult it was to change the meeting time to suit people. Older members would prefer to meet during the day, but when? It would be impossible to park near our present venue during a week day and guest speakers would be more difficult to arrange. Others members still work and can only come at night. So at the moment we are still tied to Friday night.

On the optimistic side, our club provides a social function where people can talk with others, have a laugh, enjoy a cuppa, have a winge over why their roses aren't blooming or their fig tree isn't producing, maybe get good old-fashioned advice face to face, or learn something new from a guest speaker. At the moment our numbers are down from the good years, but we were all younger then. Lower numbers and higher costs also mean it is not possible to arrange those highlights of the year – the coach trips. What we need is a influx of young 50-year-olds (or any-year-olds) to guarantee the club's future and people who are willing to take on some of the executive duties that make a club continue to function smoothly.

## Some Personalities Who Helped Make the Garden Club



Thelma Ribee and her husband won more than 20 champion & reserve champion prizes in Maitland Garden Competitions. Here she sits amid the flowers in 1993. Both Thelma and Dick Ribee were foundation executives of the club.



Elva Wood (“Woodsie”) d. 1995 who looked after the Trading Table for 23 years. Her blue mini would be over-flowing each month as she ferried the plants for sale to members. Older members still have stories of her dedication.



Jeanie Burgess “on her knees” in her prize-winning garden which won top prizes in Maitland & *Sydney Morning Herald* Garden Competitions in the late 1960s. Jeanie joined the club in its first year. She was appointed a Life Member in 1998 and died 2007



Claire Simmons was a longtime active member and Trading Table Supervisor from 1987 to 2007. She won many awards for floral art throughout the district. She died at 96 in 2012 still a member of the club.



Peter Way, President for 19 years, back in 1982, when the club sponsored the Annual Flower Show in Pender Place. Peter drove the club members on our bus tours in earlier days, and was renowned for his champion dahlias.



Betty Laidler's speciality was Floral Art. She demonstrated and judged all over the Hunter. She was always an active member with her daughter Llonda. Here she is pictured at the 1981 Annual Spring Fair run by the Garden Club. In 1995 she won the national Joan O'Brien Award for Floral Art Excellence. Betty acted as club historian for many years collecting photos and cuttings of our activities.



*Left.* Our long-serving duo, Judy and Geoff Hicks in their garden in 1983 with son, Bradley (6) and daughter, Melanie (8). Judy has been Treasurer and then Secretary off and on since 1982, while Geoff has been Treasurer and then President since 1989. As well, Geoff is at present Garden Clubs of Australia Organiser for Hunter South Zone. Geoff has written a weekly gardening page for the *Maitland Mercury* for the last ten years to help publicise the club.



Adele Cockburn, Show Bench Supervisor for many years and a skilled floral art exhibitor. Here she demonstrates in the 1970s how to create a prize-winning terrarium, one of her specialities. Adele has been Chief Steward of Horticulture at the Maitland Show for the last 30 years.



Barbara Horn, foundation member who was guest speaker at our 40th anniversary in 2007. Barbara has been a guest speaker at district clubs on numerous occasions. She has been a selector with the Open Gardens Scheme.

*Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

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*The Maitland and District Historical Society Inc. has a number of publications for sale at the rooms at 3 Cathedral Street Maitland. For details of the publications for sale, or to purchase, please visit the rooms during open hours Wednesday and Saturday between 10 AM and 3 PM. Alternatively, contact the Society on 0438 623 299 or email [maitlandhistorical@gmail.com](mailto:maitlandhistorical@gmail.com).*