

Bulletin of Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

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



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*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 a Madame Weigel publication was sourced from Wikipedia.

Telephone : 0468 438 990 note this is a new number

Email : maitlandhistorical@gmail.com

Website : <http://www.maitlandhistorical.org>

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 normally open to members between 11 and 3 on Wednesdays and Saturdays, although NSW regulations are in flux.

Patrons: The Most Reverend Bill Wright, Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

Dr AC Archer AM

Current Office Bearers :

President : Kevin Short

Vice President : Allan Thomas

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Bulletin Editor : Lisa Thomas

Consultant Editor : Kevin Short

Bulletin contributions are being sought. Please contact the Society via email
maitlandhistorical@gmail.com

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While every care is taken in the compilation and editing of the information contained in this bulletin, Maitland and District Historical Society Inc. and its editors do not accept responsibility for the accuracy of this information

Editor's Notes: At one time almost every girl was taught to sew. Sewing, both plain and "fancy", was an essential skill when ready-made clothing was rare. Lucky homes boasted an often highly decorated treadle sewing machine. Without a doubt few contemporary women have the ability to sew a fashionable outfit sourced from a paper pattern. And when did commercially produced patterns become available in Australia? The answer to that question will be found in Judy Nicholson's article on the Polish-born Madame Johanna Weigel. Judy's interest in Madame Weigel was sparked by an ABC program and Judy has uncovered a link between this pioneer of the Australian clothing pattern industry and the Maitland area.

Also in this edition we have several articles which have previously featured in the "Our Past" section of the *Maitland Mercury*.

Patterns of the Past: Madame Weigel – The Maitland Connection

By Judy Nicholson

The ABC television program Landline broadcast of 29 August 2021 featured a report on Madame Weigel, a lady who offered a vital new development for Australasian seamstresses – paper patterns for home sewing.

After life in Prussia, Vienna and America, meeting her husband Oscar Weigel in New York, Johanna and Oscar arrived in Australia in 1877, establishing a business in Melbourne. Commencing in 1878, Weigel's patterns spanned nine decades.

With Weigel's publications distributed throughout Australia and New Zealand, Madame Weigel soon became a household name. She worked alongside her husband, Oscar, to become the first commercial manufacturers of paper patterns in Australasia, and to publish Weigel's Journal of Fashion (1880-1915) and Madame Weigel's Journal of Fashion (1915-1950). Finally, after 91 years of business and millions of patterns sold, Madame Weigel's paper pattern business closed in 1969.

[Source: Madame Weigel's Patterns 1878-1950, Veronica R. Lampkin, 2020.]

As residents of Maitland between 1880 and 1925, ladies would have been

familiar with Madame Weigel's business, thanks to the advertising columns of the *Maitland Mercury*. The first Weigel advertisement appeared in the *Mercury* in October 1880 using their Pitt Street, Sydney address, noting that 'customers at a distance write for catalogue of fashions.'

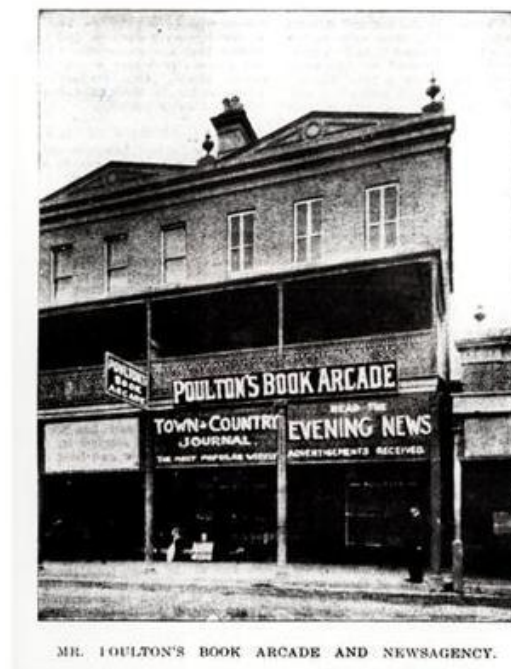
In April 1881, a King Street address was advertised and importantly AGENTS WANTED.

The Weigel empire depended on a network of agents in towns throughout Australia and in Maitland, Poulton's Book Arcade stepped into this role in March 1882.



W. T. POULTON has on hand a Complete Stock of **MADAME WEIGEL'S** PAPER PATTERNS OF DRESSES, MANTLES, etc. The Patterns are cut in six different sizes for Ladies and Children, accompanied by directions and illustrations for making up. Sold at prices ranging from 6d. to 2s. Newest styles monthly in *Weigel's Journal of Fashions*. Price 7d., by post 8d., or 6s. per annum post free (payable in advance). Catalogue of Fashions, 3d.; by post, 4d. Orders by letters attended to on receipt of price and postage. Sole Agent for Maitland—

W. T. POULTON,
STATIONERS' HALL, WEST MAITLAND. 1882




In 1893 Poulton's regularly advertised that they kept "Weigel's journals of fashions and cut-out patterns. Send for catalogue. 3d. posted 4d. Book Arcade, W. Maitland."

Poulton's premises still stand at 307 High Street.

BUSINESS NOTICES.

MADAME WEIGEL'S

Cut Paper Patterns
SAVE MONEY.
Perfect Fit



PRICES FROM 3d.
CATALOGUE 1d.
FULL STOCK AT

**WEIGEL'S FAMOUS CUT PAPER PAT-
TERNS** all true to size. Catalogues of
same sent post free 1½d.
WEIGEL'S JOURNAL of FASHIONS, price 3d
Subscription, including *Gratis Pattern*, post
free, 3s 6d year; six months, 1s 9d.

W. T. POULTON
WEST MAITLAND AND CESSNOCK.
'Phone 173.

Maitland Mercury 3 October 1911

Compton & Pankhurst, Booksellers & Stationers, of West Maitland were also advertised stockists of Weigel's Journal in 1910.

FOR LADIES ONLY

LADIES, HAVE YOU THOUGHT OF YOUR
MAITLAND SHOW DRESSES ?
DO YOU WISH TO LOOK AS SMART AS OTHERS ?
IF SO, CALL AND SEE

**POULTON'S FULL RANGE OF THE VERY
LATEST FASHION BOOKS.**

Thousands of different designs. Each Book contains two
or three different patterns.

WELDON'S LADIES' JOURNAL, 10s.	HOME BUDGET, 6d.
WELDON'S CHILDREN'S BAZAAR, 8d.	
AUSTRALIAN HOME JOURNAL, 6d.	
COMING FASHIONS, 1/3.	ELITE STYLES, 2/9.
FASHIONS FOR ALL, 10d.	DELINEATOR, 1/6.

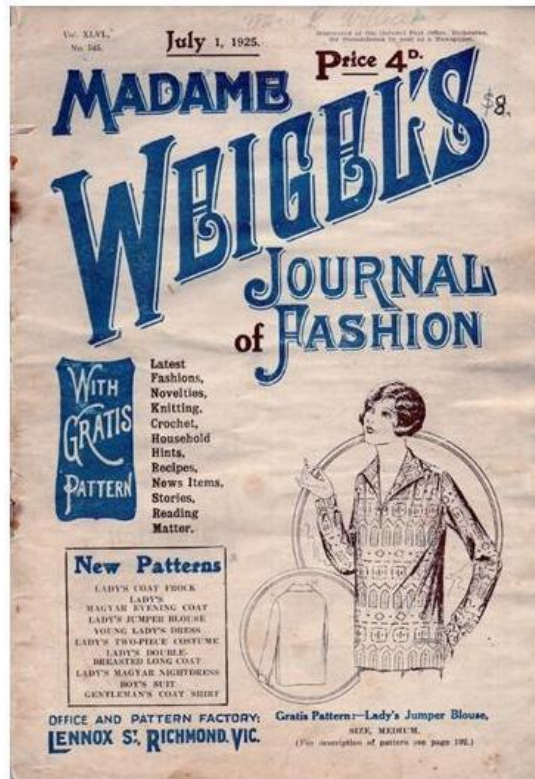
FULL RANGE OF LEACHES BOOKS.
CHILDREN'S AND LADIES' DRESSMAKER, 6d.
AND HUNDREDS OF OTHER BOOKS.

MADAME WEIGEL'S PAPER PATTERNS.
WE ALWAYS CARRY OVER 3000 DIFFERENT PATTERNS.
Write for Madame Weigel's Book. Enclose 2½d in stamps that
will cover cost of Book and Postage.
POSTAGE ON ALL FASHION BOOKS EXTRA.

POULTON'S

This final display format advertisement appeared in the *Maitland Mercury* 18 February 1925. The final Weigel promotion appeared in January 1933.

Although Johanna Weigel died in 1940, her business continued until 1969.





More information regarding Madame Weigel is available at Veronica Lampkin's website. <https://www.madameweigel.com.au/>

Also at <https://iview.abc.net.au/video/RF2004Q029S00>

Editor's note: Madame Weigel's will stipulated that her estate of £71,844 be divided among five Melbourne hospitals which had looked after her employees. She also established several engineering scholarships in her husband's name at the University of Melbourne.

Clearly a kind woman.

The Maitland CWA's Role During the City's Floods

By Lisa Thomas



The CWA hall in Bulwer Street in the 1950s

During the 1949, 1950, and 1955 city floods the Maitland Branch of the Country Women's Association responded to the needs of the community.

The Branch was able to provide a safe refuge when Maitland flooded because its hall was in a fortunate physical position. The spacious CWA hall in Bulwer Street, which opened in 1941 and had functioned as the Service to Soldiers Building during WWII, was in a relatively raised position and possessed an upper level.

In the 1949 flood at least 1600 Maitland homes were under water. The CWA sheltered several hundred men and women of all ages, in addition to their household goods and pets, and even, reportedly, a cow. Similar numbers sheltered in the hall during the 1950 flood.

Fortunately the CWA hall itself was structurally unscathed during both floods.

Their 1949 and 1950 experiences made the Branch ladies critical of the official flood response up to that time.

At the 1950 CWA Hunter River Group Conference at Quirindi the Maitland Branch successfully proposed a motion to request that the New South Wales

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government “institute an effective automatic flood warning system on the Hunter River, so as to avoid repetition of the undesirable and conflicting reports made during the 1949-50 floods.”

During the lethal 1955 flood, although the Bulwer Street hall suffered water damage, it once again provided many locals with temporary shelter.

When news of Maitland's 1955 flood reached the wider CWA organization, groups from around the country gave what they could in an outpouring of solidarity.

Contributions were received from the CWA head office in Sydney and from twenty-three individual NSW branches including Taree, Forbes, Liverpool, and Picton.

Donations came from CWA branches as far away as Dulacca Qld, Narrikup WA and Natya Vic. Money was even received from a women's organization in England.

Some donations were monetary and some were of goods, and were funnelled through the Maitland Branch, which itself gave £410 towards flood relief.

Many shipments were of simple items of immediate need. For example, CWA branches around the state sent new items of a personal nature such as underwear, pyjamas, nightgowns, and layettes. The branches also sent many shipments of used clothing and the Maitland Branch held several hand-out days to distribute them.

Branch President Mrs Minnie Parish organized the distribution of hundreds of sheets, towels, blankets, pillow slips, tea towels, and tablecloths. The Branch purchased and handed out kitchen utensils and groceries.

The Newcastle CWA Branch forwarded 100 pairs of shoes from the Paddle Shoe Company. The Chatswood Evening Technical Handicrafts class sent many storage baskets. Five hundred bottles of Zixo Bleaching Fluid were gratefully received from Cawley and Co.

Many toys were donated to the Branch and were forwarded to the Crippled Children's Maitland Committee and the Kindergarten School.

The flood waters had barely abated before the Branch ladies were again highly critical regarding the government's preparedness for floods and were making their opinions known.

At the State CWA conference in April 1955, on the representations of the Maitland Branch, a telegram was sent to the Premier Joseph Cahill on behalf of

the 1000 delegates, urging him to take immediate action at Government level to remove the causes of the floods and avoid further disasters. Many CWA ladies also sent him individual telegrams of complaint.

Maitland and District Historical Society takes us back to the days of feuds in the newspaper letters sections

By Chas Keys

Trolling is a feature of today's online environment.

Often when trolls exchange verbal blows in social media and on online news commentary sites, they do so anonymously.



At Maitland Gaol the last flogging was administered in 1905 when Henry Clark was given ten lashes for "attempting to commit an un-natural [presumably sexual] act". The last hanging there was in 1899 - Charles Hines.

The language they use is typically harsh, provocative, inflammatory and designed to offend. Such language is not new, of course: it goes back well before the online era. In the nineteenth century it was seen often in newspapers, for example in Letters to Editors.

It was on show in the *Maitland Mercury*, often effusively, sometimes wittily and in the flowery style of the times.

There was an exchange in 1893 when two letter writers, John F Holden and

'Observer', traded verbal blows on the question of flogging and execution as punishments.

At that time these punishments were coming under question on humanitarian grounds and their effectiveness was being challenged.

But opinions were divided, and society was only beginning to move away from them. Holden, evidently a humanitarian, opposed these "corrections".

He thought "making butchers' chopping blocks of human backs" was both barbaric and ineffective, and execution unchristian and used disproportionately against the poor and wretched.

Better, he thought, that governments invest in the 'instruction' (today we would say education) of those who are "bred up without morals and cast upon the world without a prospect".

The circumstances of the poor, he was saying, encouraged criminality and thus exposed them to society's retribution by the brutal means of the time.

'Observer' took a different stance. He wrote sarcastically of Holden's "ridiculous effusions" and went on: "Although I do not intend to notice any future personal letters of your correspondent, I will, nevertheless, continue to watch his newspaper contributions, and when I think fit, criticise them when they deserve it, which I conclude will be pretty often, unless he greatly improves, and manages to shake off his antediluvian impressions, which are wholly unsuited to this nineteenth century".

'Observer' even resorted to verse: "Behold a man who loves to prate/ On all affairs of Church and State/ Proud owner of a clever pate/ Infallible as sure as fate".

And "I long have marked his bold career/ And far be it from me to jeer/ Although his logic's rather queer/ And scarcely that of Sage or Seer So farewell, Johnny Holden".

Holden shot back: 'Observer' had "again escaped from his keepers". He "sheds the luminous refulgence of his lofty intellect upon my humble expression of opinion." 'Observer' came again.

Holden's tactics, he said, had been "abuse in lieu of arguments, entirely ignoring the opinions of those who differ from him, forgetful of the fact that they may possibly be right and himself wrong. But his egregious egotism will not allow him to see this".



The feared cat o nine tails

Long Bridge the answer to swampy land to Maitland's west

By Chas Keys



From the earliest days of Wallis Plains, established as a convict farming settlement in 1818-19, travel across the low-lying, swampy and flood prone area below what became known as Campbells Hill was problematic.

By the early 1820s, with farm settlement burgeoning further up the valley and access a critical necessity, intending settlers, teamsters, livestock, carts and wagons had great difficulty in traversing the area.

During wet weather or floods, movement could be impossible for weeks at a time. The solution was a bridge, and one was built in about 1825 over the most westerly section of the low land of Veterans Flat.

In either 1833 or 1838 a much longer structure, the first Long Bridge and like its predecessor made of wood, came into being. Built by convicts, it was a toll bridge, with a toll house at its western (Campbells Hill) end.

Periodically damaged by floods, some of which covered its deck, it frequently needed costly maintenance of piles, crossbeams, handrail and sleepers. Parts of the bridge were completely rebuilt at times.

The big flood of 1893 washed away much of the bridge. It was quickly rebuilt in ironbark, 1050 feet (320 metres) long, and in 1894 thousands of people attended the opening ceremony making it hard for dignitaries to get to the dais erected in the middle.

Fifteen years later a tram trestle was added on one side to allow tram services to be extended to Regent St for the benefit of Campbells Hill and Telarah residents.

Between 1935 and 1938 a replacement structure was built in concrete, and on Arbor Day, 1939, school children planted poplar trees on its downstream side.

The record flood of 1955, which at its peak saw water a metre and a half deep over the deck and several Mount Pleasant houses dashed to pieces on being washed into it, destroyed several spans. Westward travel on the vital New England Highway was rendered impossible.

Again the bridge was rebuilt, this time in concrete and steel. The new structure was opened in August 1956, 18 months after the flood.

More poplars were planted, gifted by Muswellbrook Council. In 2018, old and apparently decaying, they were removed after a council decision that provoked negative comment in some quarters.

Early in the present century, concerns arose on Maitland's emergency management committee about the fitness of the bridge for evacuation purposes.

In big floods, but even in floods smaller than the one that struck in 1955, the Long Bridge is likely to be the last route out of Lorn, the CBD, Horseshoe Bend and the streets adjoining High St. If it becomes untrafficable through water over the deck or damaged by debris, people who have not evacuated will be stranded unless they can be rescued by floodboat or helicopter. It is distinctly possible that there will be

insufficient boats and helicopters to get everybody out.

The solution, one day, will be a new Long Bridge. It might be part of a gradually rising western High St, the bridge itself sloping upwards to the west and finishing higher than the current structure at Campbells Hill.

Such a bridge would help make it possible for those in the older parts of Maitland to escape a developing flood in their own vehicles.

Red hot competition to be the district's best ploughman

By Chas Keys

'Ploughing matches' were very much a feature of nineteenth century life in rural Australia - but are now largely forgotten.

In Maitland and elsewhere they played a dual role: firstly as sporting entertainments, but importantly they also provided training and opportunities for farm labourers to improve their skills and make some money 'on the side'.

No doubt those whose keen eye and sensitive handling of horses or bullocks saw them do well in matches were in a good position to bargain for better wages as well.

Matches, as the word implies, were competitive sporting encounters.

In the Maitland area from the mid-1840s they were annual affairs conducted by the Hunter River Agricultural Society in association with what became the Maitland Show.

Rules evolved and became standardised: ploughmen would have to plough a set area (most commonly half an acre) in a specified time, and they would then be judged on the straightness and evenness of depth of their furrows.

The ploughmen's handling of farm animals was on display along with advances in plough design.

Competition occurred in classes: Class A was the elite 'all-comers' class, often attracting a dozen or more ploughmen, and there was usually a class for those aged under 18.

This was about developing the skills of new generations of ploughmen.

Competitors learned from watching their peers and prowess was stimulated.

In the Maitland area the matches were held on various farms in Bolwarra, Oakhampton, East Maitland, West Maitland, Louth Park, Ravensfield and elsewhere.

Sometimes sites to host the events were sought through advertising in the *Mercury*.

For many years, the winners of Class A matches received £4, and there were sometimes silver cups and medals as well, which were donated by leading citizens seeking to associate themselves with the events.

In one competition, at Ravensfield in 1845, first prize was a male calf and the second place- getter won a female pig.

At their peak, ploughing matches attracted hundreds of spectators.

There was betting on the results, ale was provided to the ploughmen as they worked, and afterwards there were sumptuous lunches and dinners in nearby inns.

Dinners were accompanied by dancing, toasts, speech-making and the awarding of prizes.

In the manner of the times 'three cheers' were called for the Society, its chairman and the judges.

Matches were reported in the *Mercury*, usually with quotes from the judges. Their praise for the quality of the ploughing witnessed was often fulsome.

Ploughing matches were held in many locations right across NSW, and in some years there was a kind of 'state championship' held at the Agricultural and Horticultural Association's grounds in Parramatta.

In 1869 this event attracted ploughmen from a wide area including the Hills District, the Hawkesbury, the Hunter, Bathurst, the Southern Highlands and the Shoalhaven. It has been reported that at noon on the day of competition there were 1500 people in attendance.

The prize for winning Class A was £10 - a not insignificant sum at the time.

There is no record of George Mead, a skilled ploughman who arrived from England in 1848 and settled near Lorn, ever having participated in ploughing matches either as a competitor or a judge.

But it is worth noting his son William, aged 26, won Class A in 1888.

Three years later the last Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association's ploughing match was held.

Presumably, such matches were no longer useful to the farming economy of the Hunter.