

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

(Established March 1977)

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



**Early Croquet in Maitland Park**

**Volume 23, Number 3**

**August 2016**

*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:** Photograph supplied by Pamela Gentle

**Correspondence :** P.O. Box 333, Maitland NSW 2320

**Telephone :** 0438 623 299

**Email :** maitlandhistorical@gmail.com

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

**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 :**

**President :** Keith Cockburn

**Vice Presidents :** Peter Smith, Ruth Trappel

**Treasurer :** Val Rudkin

**Secretary:** Kevin Short

**Bulletin Editor :** Lisa Thomas

**Consultant Editor :** Keith Cockburn

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

©Copyright. This publication may be used for private study and research. Please contact the Maitland & District Historical Society Inc. regarding any other use.

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

## Update on “Holbeach”

The property known as “Holbeach”, which was the subject of a 2014 Bulletin article, has recently been listed by the National Trust of NSW. “Holbeach” is the 1840 convict-built Lochinvar coach station constructed for pioneer Henry Nowland of Muswellbrook. As the 1850s “Cross Keys” hotel, the building had a connection with Johannes Wenz, one of the original six German vinedressers brought out in 1837/1838 by the Macarthur family of Camden to improve the quality of Colonial wines.

“Holbeach” will be included in a walk around the historic precinct of Lochinvar to be held on Sunday 18 September. This walk is sponsored by the National Trust. For bookings or more information ring Holly on 49344314.

## Earnest Douglas Pyle

In the most recent Queen’s Birthday Honours list, “Doug” Pyle was awarded an Order of Australia medal. Although Doug has long been a staple of Maitland civic life, he was actually born in Sydney on the 21<sup>st</sup> of October 1922. He served in WWII as a code-breaker and came north in 1947 after being demobbed. Doug had a long and successful career in the teaching profession and has been active in many civic organisations. He was a founding member of the Maitland Repertory Society and met his wife Nell when they were both involved in a production of “Tons of Money”. Doug will be presented with his medal at Government House on 7 September.

## The History of the Maitland Croquet Club

by Pamela Gentle

Croquet has been played in Maitland since at least the 1920s. The photo on the cover of this Bulletin shows a group of players in Maitland Park in the early part of the century. Unfortunately all records of this group have disappeared.

The modern game of croquet is thought to have started in Ireland in the 1830s and taken to England in the 1850s, where it became an instant success as it provided the first opportunity for women to participate in an outdoor sport on an equal basis with men. Over the next 30 years standard rules were established and national competitions commenced. The first national headquarters was the Wimbledon All England Croquet Club, founded in 1868, which later became the Wimbledon All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club. With the rise of tennis, croquet declined, but by the last decade of the century tournaments were re-established, and in 1900 croquet featured as a demonstration sport in the Olympics in Paris. Players from France won all the medals. Croquet spread rapidly, in particular to Australia, New Zealand and other British colonies.

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

Maitland Croquet Club was established in Maitland Park in October 1990, and the first group of players started to learn the game in February 1991.

Win Wedding and Wendy Harvey were instrumental in starting the club. Both ladies had learned to play in Newcastle – Win at the Wallsend club, and Wendy at the Newcastle club, known at that time as National Park Croquet Club. Land was offered in picturesque Maitland Park, which was ideal as there was plenty of room for expansion.



A group ready to learn to play croquet

A full size croquet court measures 35 yards by 28 yards. One court was established at first, but the club now has four beautifully maintained courts, with lights on two of them for night play when required.



## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

The first meeting of Maitland Croquet Club was held in October 1990, with Win Wedding elected as President, Pam Gentle secretary, and Wendy Harvey treasurer. Members of National Park and Wallsend clubs were asked to conduct a series of lessons to introduce prospective members to the game. Twenty people took part in those first lessons, and the club was on its way.



There is a lot of work involved in establishing a croquet club. For any club, the lawns are the most important asset. They need to be flat and smooth, with the grass cut short. With the help of Maitland Council and the Park staff, the rough park ground was gradually turned into a croquet lawn.



For the first two years the club had no storage facilities for hoops, balls and mallets. At the beginning these were transported in the boot of Win and Keith Wedding's car to be set up each time for play, and then we were offered storage in the old unused outside toilet belonging to the "Red House", the former rectory of St Paul's Church. In 1992, after some vigorous fund-raising by members, and with the assistance of a government grant, a concrete 'round-house' bunker was built to store the growing amount of equipment needed to run the club.





By the end of 1993, the club had 30 members, most of whom came for the fun of the game and the social interaction. However there were a growing number of players who were more competitive, and were keen to take part in competitions at other clubs and in state and national competitions.



The club's first success was the Royal Sydney Golf Club centenary competition. To celebrate their centenary, Royal Sydney Golf Club held competitions in all the sports played there, including croquet. Our team of Brad Coulton, Wendy and Fred Harvey, and Pam Gentle were victorious in the final over Camden Park club, a very exciting introduction to serious play!



*Fred Harvey, Brad Coulton, Pam Gentle, Wendy Harvey with the team from Camden Park*

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

The first club championship was held in 1992, the final between Brad Coulton and Dennis Aartsen, with Brad winning on the day.



*Brad Coulton and Dennis Aartsen*

Members of Maitland have gone on to represent the club, the state, and the country in many competitions since.

Improvements came gradually to the club. In 1998 we opened our new club-house, funded by a government grant and more fund-raising by our growing number of members. This event was celebrated with members from other Hunter clubs at a gala day, and was attended by our patron, Peter Blackmore, the Mayor of Maitland. By this time we had expanded to four well-maintained lawns, and were one of the biggest clubs in New South Wales.



Four of our past and present members have been honoured by having a lawn named after them. The Win Wedding lawn and Keith Wedding lawn were named after foundation members, Win being the driving force in establishing the croquet club in Maitland, and Keith being a tireless worker in bringing the lawns up to playing standard. Noel Carmody was honoured as a life member for his continuing work for the club throughout his membership. Fred Harvey has been a 'behind the scenes' worker for the club since the beginning, and was honoured by having Lawn 1 named after him.

## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*

Having four lawns enables the club to offer their facilities to both Croquet NSW and Croquet Australia for state and national events to be held here. In 2001 Maitland hosted the Eire Cup, which is the interstate team competition in Association Croquet, contested by all 6 states. This was the first time such a high standard of croquet had been seen in the Hunter, and was an inspiration to many of our players. Since then we have hosted both Association and Golf Croquet events for New South Wales and Australia, including the very first Golf Croquet Interstate teams competition in 2007, in which two of Maitland club members, Robyn Wallace and Pam Gentle, were members of the New South Wales team.



The NSW Association Croquet team playing at Maitland Croquet Club – Stephen Meatheringham, Tony Hall, Chris Borlaise, Peter Landrebe, Lorraine LeBlang, Nerida Taylor, Rosemary Graham

There are two main versions of croquet played at Maitland - Association Croquet and Golf Croquet. Maitland has had success in both versions of the game, more particularly in Golf Croquet. Our Division 1 Pennants team have won the State Pennants seven times over the past nine years, and have been runner-up twice. The club has had several members representing New South Wales in the state team for Golf Croquet, and also playing for Australia in competitions here in Australia as well as overseas in New Zealand, Egypt and England. Pam Gentle captained the NSW team in Golf Croquet to win the Shield on two occasions. Other Maitland members to represent the state are Trevor Black, Robyn Wallace, Peter Smith, Barry Wells and Geoff and Jacky McDonald.



Pam Gentle and Trevor Black, members of the NSW Golf Croquet state team



## *Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.*



A group of Maitland players competing against players from Newcastle and Central Coast

Maitland runs several competitions throughout each year in which players from clubs all over New South Wales compete. Competitions are held in both Association and Golf Croquet, with the emphasis being on friendship while also promoting serious croquet.



Members of Maitland club have held positions in the broader family of croquet – Jacky McDonald, Robyn Wallace and John Compton have been President of Croquet NSW, Robyn Wallace is at present Chairman of the Board of Croquet Australia, and other members have held positions on Selection, Refereeing and Coaching committees for NSW and Australia.

Our club numbers have continued to grow, from the first twenty people to learn the basics of the game in 1991, to our present 76. New members are always welcomed.



# **The Lament of Jim Crow**

By Kevin Short

The 'Old St Peter's or 'Glebe' Cemetery sits on a lonely windswept hillside, just south of the unmade extension of George Street, East Maitland with a westward vista across Wallis Creek and the flood plain to Maitland.

The land for the burial ground was set aside as part of George Boyle White's survey of (East) Maitland in 1829, and was set adjacent to the 18 acre Glebe, abutting Hewston Mitchell's 'Rathluba Estate'. Internments more or less continued from that point until almost the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and whilst principally a Church of England burial ground, it includes the greater portion of Maitland's early citizens across all denominations.

In March of this year (2016), unheralded and without publicity, the grave of Jim Crow was opened and his body exhumed. It begs the question; who was Jim Crow and why were his mortal remains exhumed?

To find the answer we need to travel back to the morning of 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1860 when an Aboriginal man named Jim Crow visited a farmhouse at Thalabane near Dungog, and asked the farmer's wife, Jane Delanthy for water. Jane, who was pregnant, was alone in the house with her child. Her nearest neighbour lived a half-kilometre away. She had no water so she offered the stranger coffee.

Whilst Crow may well have been guilty, there were conflicting stories as to what happened next that January morning but there is no doubting that an all-white male jury of the Maitland Circuit Court, took little more than half an hour to convict Jim Crow of Mrs Delanthy's rape. The law worked quickly in those days and on April 26, barely three months after the crime was committed, Jim was hanged at Maitland Gaol along with a convicted murderer named John Jones.

The Northern times of 28<sup>th</sup> April, 1860 carried the most graphic description of the day's proceedings:

*The extreme penalty of the law was carried into effect on Thursday morning, upon two of the criminals who were sentenced to death at the last sitting of the Circuit Court, within the precincts of the Maitland Gaol – the third of the condemned men having been reprieved on the previous afternoon. The Sheriff and his officials, with the Police Magistrate and a guard of the local constabulary, were present in superintending the arrangements for the dread ceremony, and a number of the inhabitants of the town were admitted within the gaol walls to witness the execution. John Jones, a navvy, for the murder of Rebecca Bailey (an unfortunate woman with whom he had privately cohabited), at Maitland, and "Jim. Crow" (an aboriginal), for the commission of raping the person of Jane Delanthy at Thalaba, near Dungog, were the condemned men appointed to suffer. During the period of their incarceration under sentence we believe the prisoners had been respectful and obedient to the religious admonitions of the clergyman, both professing the Church of England faith, having been attended by the Rev W. Greaves, of St Peter's Church, East Maitland. Just before the men came forth of the cell Bailey*

*(the husband of the fallen and murdered woman) visited and shook hands with Jones, weeping copiously as he bade him farewell. The ill-fated men exchanged a parting salutation with the respited man, previous to leaving the cell. At about half-past 9 o'clock Jones and Jim Crow came forth with their arms pinioned from the cell, clothed in white shirts and light trousers, and advanced to the fatal scaffold, upon the lower steps of which they knelt and prayed. Jones then, casting off his shock, went up the steps with becoming firmness - the poor aboriginal listlessly following his movements in every respect, and looking externally penitent. Upon ascending the gallows the doomed men were placed in position, the ropes adjusted around their necks, and white caps drawn over their features, by the public executioner (Elliott) whilst the clergyman was engaged in leading the last solemn service of his church in their behalf: the dying men seeming contrite and resigned to their fate. Prayer concluded, the lever was pressed by Elliott, and the bolt slipped from its socket, when the narrow platform descended with a clang, and the men were in the throes and agonies of death. Jones appeared to suffer but little before life was extinct, but the aboriginal struggled convulsively for a longer period. In a few moments the souls of the wretched men were in eternity, and the vengeance of the Law was satisfied.*

*Everything in connection with the awful scene was conducted with decency and order, and in terrible silence. After remaining suspended for over half an hour, the bodies were lowered to the ground, and afterwards placed in shells for interment in the cemetery. The executioner kindled a fire in the gaol yard, and burnt the rope used on the occasion. It is unpleasant to record in reference to this legal tragedy, the course jest of Elliott, who, upon releasing the noose about Jones's neck, callously observed that he soon 'cooked' them. Some other heartless remarks were passed. A respectable gentleman, within hearing, re-joined with a pertinent and satirical commentary upon the salutary influences of capital punishment, when the hangman could so repulsively allude to his occupation. The sight is revolting, and the sensation sickening; but the whole affair is destitute of a sound human reason to recommend it as a final penalty for crime.*

Cases such as Jim Crow's were all too common during this period of Australian history when the underlying purpose of the rape laws were to protect white women from black men. Between 1860 and 1882, when use of the death penalty for rape ended, just one in fourteen men executed for rape in Queensland was European. What makes Jim's story unique is what happened next.

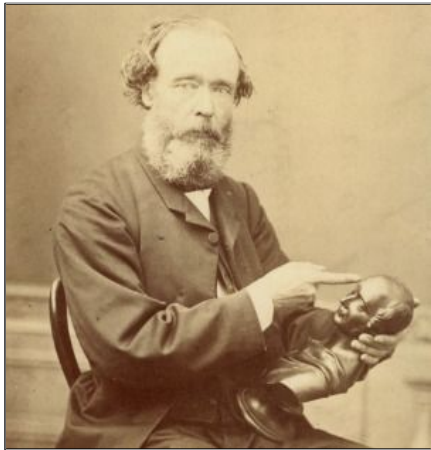
To understand this fascinating story, one needs to have at least a peripheral understanding of the 'science' of Phrenology. Basically, it was a study of the structure of the skull to determine a person's character and mental tendencies. In layman's terms, a Phrenologist claimed to be able to tell the character of a person by the bumps on his or her head.

One such phrenologist was Archibald Hamilton, a Scott, who within minutes of Jim being taken from the scaffold, took a plaster cast of his head, no doubt the cast to become an exhibit in Hamilton's quackery and travelling vaudeville show.

The story took a macabre twist three months later when the Sexton at St Peter's Glebe Cemetery, Mr William House, complained to the Rector, the Reverend Greaves, that Hamilton had offered him one pound to dig up Crow's and Jones' bodies and remove their

heads. The next day, Greaves visited the Police Magistrate Denny Day, only to find that Church Warden, Edward Ogg had already beaten him (to Day).

Hamilton may have etched a profile for himself in the district through his '*scientific*' lectures, but moonlit nights and posthumous beheadings were apparently beyond the pale. He was bailed and committed to stand trial. The alleged crime: *inciting another to exhume corpses from a burial ground*. Day, who later denied ever telling Hamilton that he could have the heads, issued the summons for the phrenologist's arrest.



Archibald S Hamilton - Phrenologist

In its issue of 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1860, *The Sydney Morning Herald* reported verbatim in over 4,000 words, the indictment of Hamilton in Maitland Quarter Sessions. Interestingly, it was only listed as a '*misdemeanour*', the sad irony being that they had but offered a single paragraph to summarise Jim Crow's defence on the more serious capital crime. Hamilton defended himself, his defence more or less around the theme ...'*just as a geologist needs rocks, a phrenologist needs heads ..*'.

Whether it was the eloquence of Hamilton's defence or simple racism on the part of the jury, Hamilton was acquitted after a deliberation of only 15 minutes, despite a lengthy summary by His Honour, Mr Justice Owen, reminding the jury '*that the possession of human bones might be very important for the ends of science, and very desirable for the benefit of the public; but it was quite clear that in pursuing science, it must be done within legitimate bounds!*' I guess one could offer that Australian colonial justice was simply '*black and white*'!

During his life Hamilton courted notoriety: as well as being accused of bigamy, he was an energetic campaigner against capital punishment and in 1880, was involved in protests against Ned Kelly's death sentence. I guess it needs to be remembered that Ned's head also became separated at some point from his body although it was never suggested that Hamilton was involved.

Despite Hamilton's escape from the clutches of the law, it could not and did not save Jim Crow from the phrenologist, who, '*at some point within the next two years*' broke into the grave and added Jim's skull to his collection. He displayed it unashamedly in lectures for decades afterwards.

Five years after Hamilton's 1884 death, his widow Agnes, shipped his collection of 55 human skulls and skull fragments from Sydney to the National Museum of Victoria, today's Museum Victoria, where they remained for 126 years.

Two years ago, while Canberra academic, Alexandra Roginski, was at Museum Victoria researching her Monash University honours thesis on the repatriation of Aboriginal remains, she was asked to try and trace the identity of a skull. Its paper label had deteriorated to show only his name, and the partial place name "*....tland*".

By typing '*Hamilton*', '*phrenologist*' and '*Jim Crow*' into National Library of Australia's online newspaper archive, *Trove*, Ms Roginski discovered an 1862 *Brisbane Courier* report on one



of Hamilton's lectures in which he displayed Jim Crow's head and told the story of the 1860 execution at Maitland Gaol.

Further research found that Jim Crow was born at Clarence Town, north of Maitland, and it is believed he was a member of the Wonnarua people. Ms Roginski could find very little about his life, such as his Aboriginal name, but gaol records showed that Crow was a small man, at only five feet one inch tall and professed to be Christian, hence the burial in the Glebe cemetery.

James Wilson-Miller, and his uncle Tom Miller, elders of the Maitland-based Wonnarua Nation Aboriginal Corporation accepted Jim Crow's remains and an apology in a solemn ceremony closed to the public in the Indigenous garden of Museum Victoria's Bunjilaka Aboriginal Centre.

The recent exhumation in the '*Glebe*' was in fact a glimpse into Maitland's colourful, if sometimes shameful, colonial past. Hopefully, Jim Crow is now at peace!

**Bibliography:**

The Hanged Man and the Body Thief – Alexandra Roginski (2015)  
The Australian – July 11 2015  
The Northern Times – April 29 1860  
The Maitland Mercury & Hunter River General Advertiser, March 15 1860  
Sydney Morning Herald, August 14 1860  
A History of St Peter's Church East Maitland – James Waddell 1996

---

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).

---