

Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

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The Centenary of Trinity House

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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*

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Cover: The photograph of Trinity House, Lochinvar is by Allan Thomas.

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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)

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Editor's Notes:

The Maitland area is rich with buildings which have interesting, although little known, histories. Such is the case with Trinity House, Lochinvar's former Anglican rectory, which this year turns 100. Trinity House is particularly unusual, as it has been recorded that the plans for the rectory were drawn by Mrs. Milton Capp. In 1858 she had been born Clara Ann Clift at "Clifton". She was the daughter of Joseph Clift and the granddaughter of noted Maitland pioneer Samuel Clift, Snr.

Stylistically, Trinity House blends elements of Victorian, Federation, and, most significantly, the Arts and Crafts aesthetic, which was the decorative style Clara Ann chose for her married home "Lancedene".

Trinity House's interior Arts and Crafts features include dado rails, vertical rails, the fireplace surrounds, and the wooden ceilings.

As a church-related building designed by a woman in 1919, Trinity House is quite possibly unique.

In this edition we are privileged to present the second of the two articles which Mr. Robert Worboys has written on farming and farmers on the Bolwarra Flats, the first of which appeared in the May Bulletin. In this second article Robert considers some of the organisational issues related to farming in the area.

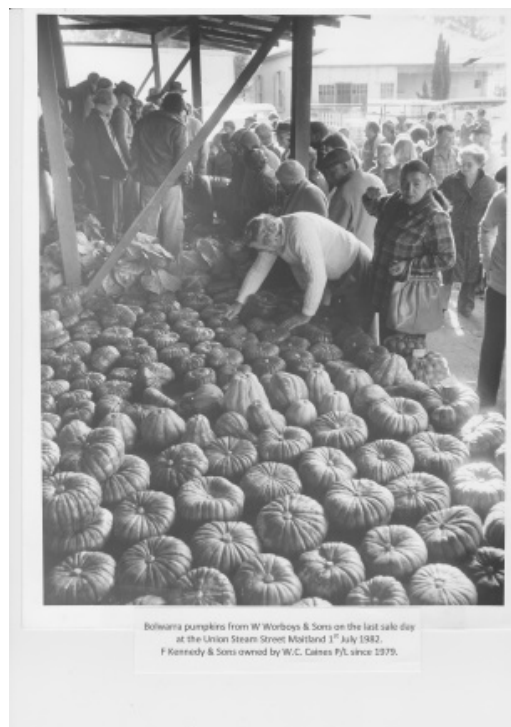
Farming and Farmers on the Bolwarra Flats, Part II
(The Organisational Infrastructure Underlying the Agricultural Economy)
By Robert Worboys

For the farming enterprises to survive and flourish, different ways were established to link together various methods of transport and marketing options that suited each individual farming operation. With the changes in technology, so did these methods change also. As with other localities in the area, a number of self-help co-operative groups were formed in Bolwarra by the farming community to support each other as farmers, along with community organisations with no connection to farming.

THE MARKET OPTIONS FOR THE SALE OF PRODUCE

The Union at Maitland

Sometimes incorrectly referred to by many as the “Maitland Markets,” the correct name was “The Union”. It was originally established in the mid 1800s by the self-help group of primary producers who were referred to across the state as the Farmers Union. The Union was initially established with the sole purpose of providing an outlet for the disposal of farm produce to enable the best return to the grower. Its original location in Maitland was the site of the present day Grand Junction Hotel in Church Street. Close proximity to the railway was used to advantage by enabling large quantities of produce to be railed to Sydney and the north western and north coast regions of the State.



The final day for the Union at Maitland was the 1st July 1982.
Pumpkins from Bolwarra were there to the end.



Sale day at the Union, Swam Murray & Hain Station Street Maitland 1922.

A typical scene up until the early 1950s on a busy sale day at The Union. This photo was February 1922.

Newcastle Fruit and Vegetable Markets

The colourful history of the Newcastle Fruit and Vegetable markets began in a formal sense in the 1930s when the local wholesalers all moved into one building in Steel Street, Newcastle. This site, which at the time was in a central location within the growing Newcastle, was chosen because of its close proximity to the Honeysuckle Point rail siding. Any produce consigned by rail was directed to this rail destination which was referred to as HSP Newcastle. For example all cases of bananas for Newcastle Markets were branded HSP Newcastle. In 1972 the Newcastle Markets relocated to a purpose built complex at Rural Drive, Sandgate. This new complex was built and owned by Newcastle City Council until 1997 when it was sold to a group of stall owners.



A shot of early days in Steel Street Newcastle

Sydney Fruit and Vegetable Markets

The early days of marketing in Sydney catered for many and varied rural produce and livestock and initially was established near the Darling Harbour Goods Yards and in the general area we now know as Haymarket. It has been said that the suburb name was chosen as it was where hay was sold in close proximity to the livestock sale yards. Over a short period of time the sale of rural produce grew like mushrooms in the Haymarket area. The sale of fruit and vegetables ended up being concentrated in the Hay and Quay Streets area of Darling Harbour until it outgrew that location and was relocated to the new purpose built complex at Flemington in 1975. Before the relocation to Flemington, Perry Park in Alexandria was used to relieve traffic congestion around the No 6 markets in Haymarket. This location was an extra site for the sale of bulk quantities of hard vegetables, (potatoes, pumpkins, gramma and onions etc), where they were sold off the back of the truck. The Perry Park businesses were also relocated to Flemington in 1975 to their own corner of the complex.



Site of the old Sydney Markets in Haymarket, now part of Paddies Market



One of the numerous buildings that make up the market complex

Brisbane and Melbourne Fruit and Vegetable Markets

Both these capital city markets were operated along similar lines to Sydney's, with a similar history of being relocated in the 1970s into more user friendly complexes from their early locations of the mid 1800s. Our local produce would usually only find its way to these outlets when their local regular producers weren't able to satisfy demand, possibly as a result of crop failure due to climatic conditions and local disasters such as fires or floods.

MARKETING OF THE CROP

Potatoes

With the vast tonnage of the summer crop potatoes harvested each day in December, it was no mean feat to find a home at a reasonable price for it once picked.

Most of the Maitland crop before 1950 was handled by Produce Merchants, Butler and Pryke and W C Cains. In later years they were joined by K Hvirf and AA Tiedeman who were all based locally. Some growers chose to consign and deliver their crop to stall holders at Newcastle Markets. The final home and use found for the crop was varied and usually was dependent on the long standing contacts made by the individual merchant over many years. Mostly the crop was pre sold before leaving the farm. Some would go to agents at one of the fruit and vegetable markets in Newcastle, Sydney and on some occasions Brisbane and often Melbourne. Agents at these capital city markets also had their own long standing regular clients and were buying from one bag to truck loads at a time. The mid 1970s saw the start of pre packing of potatoes for supply to supermarkets. This was a good outlet for local crops and the pre packer would often ask for a regular supply from a grower by name if they had used them before. Some pre packers were set up to handle their purchase in half ton bulk wooden bins. Depending on the variety grown, and subject to a test sample, (referred to as a 'cook test') satisfying their standards, there was also a ready demand from the chip processors. These processors in some instances in later years would contract a grower early in the season to supply to them X amount of tons in a designated time span. The success of the arrangement was still dependent on a 'cook test' of the potatoes. Potatoes for the chippers were usually handled in half ton bulk wooden bins. In late December there was also a strong demand for Maitland potatoes in the coastal holiday areas between Coffs Harbour and the far south coast

for use in the fish and chip shops over the holiday season. Before the advent of frozen pre-cut chips, the popular opinion was that the reasonably high moisture content of Maitland potatoes produced some of the best chips once cooked.



Various agents with potatoes at Hunter River Steam Ship wharf Newcastle Harbour 1952
This load off to Melbourne

Cauliflowers, Cabbage, Water Melons and Pumpkins

The marketing of these vegetables was usually done in one of two ways. Some growers would sell their crop to some of the vegetable merchants operating in the area who would undertake to transport and market their goods to the best available customer for the best possible price. It was possible that the sales were made through various agents established within any of the local or capital city markets on the east coast, or by private treaty to others including processors. This method of marketing meant that the grower generally only needed to concentrate on growing the crop with no worry about transport and marketing it. The other alternative was for the grower to have his own transport and to establish contacts within the market system and do his own thing. Some producers would use to their best advantage a combination of both methods.

Lucerne

As mentioned earlier, the Hunter area including Maitland was in the forefront as a lucerne breeding and growing area in the early days of the colony and for many years to follow. Lucerne hay was therefore an important product grown on the Bolwarra Flats, not only to the local farmers but also to the colony. Part of the establishment of the penal settlement at Sydney Cove was the setting up of numerous dairies in and around Sydney to supply milk and dairy products for the growing population. These dairies provided a ready market for the Hunter's hay, both in a wilted and dried form. Initially it was consigned direct by the grower to Haymarket and later by numerous other produce merchants, many of whom have long since disappeared. Since the mid 1940s I can remember both Butler and Pryke and W C Cains as local produce merchants who were later joined by J Kirkwood, all operating in Maitland handling hay.

DAIRYING ON BOLWARRA

In the 1950s, the Bolwarra Flats supported many family dairy farms which from my reckoning amounted to no fewer than 15. They were situated on the hillside with some of the farm on high ground and a major portion on the flats. The popularity of dairying in Bolwarra and across the state diminished greatly in the 1960s and 1970s to the point where the last surviving Bolwarra dairy farm ceased production in December 2003. Set up costs for bulk pickups, a change in family dynamics, the long hours involved, deregulation and the ever increasing production costs with no increase in returns brought about the end of family owned and operated dairies. The most popular feed for the cows was undoubtedly lucerne as it could be made into hay to be stored for later use, or strip grazed. Oats replaced lucerne as one of the preferred winter feeds. Sachaline and corn were also major providers of high protein fodder fed either green or from a pit silo where it had been made into silage. During the late 1960s a new feed was bred which was generally referred to as sudax which also made good silage and when given the chance to dry properly it could end up making good sweet hay.

METHODS OF TRANSPORT

The horse and dray

The common horse and dray, or van (spring cart), was for many of the early Bolwarra settlers the only means of transport, both to transport their produce and the family to town, church or

other social activities. In many cases the draft horse didn't get any rest as he was called on for both the farmer's work duties and for his social outings. For the gentry of Bolwarra and some of the fortunate farmers they were privileged to have at their disposal a pony and sulky which they used for transporting the family, "lucky mum and children". The sulky pony also used to ride to town or do messages.



A load of cabbage on a horse and dray

Paddle steamers to Sydney

With the opening up of the Hunter and the Maitland area came the use of water transport to the port of Morpeth and further upstream to the settlement of Wallis Plains (later Maitland). As the paddle steamer was the only means of transport from Maitland to Sydney for both leisure and commercial purposes it was used prolifically by the local farmers as a means of getting the produce to the Sydney market, until the opening of the Hawkesbury River Bridge in 1889. Up until the opening of the railway from Sydney to Maitland, produce and hay from the local farmer I have been told was loaded onto a dray then taken to and loaded onto steamers at the Bolwarra wharf, ready for transport to Sydney. As hay at the time was pressed into half bales about the size of a standard wool bale and much heavier, it was extremely hard work to load them onto the dray and then offload them onto the steamers at the wharf.



The site of the Bolwarra Wharf on the edge of McKimms Road Bolwarra

Railway transport

With the opening of the railway from Sydney to Newcastle in 1889, and the extension of the rail network further into the state, its use became more prevalent and more popular for the local farmers. Up unto the introduction of motor lorries in the 1940s the horse and dray was still used as the main method to get the produce to the rail or in the case of Maitland, to the Union, with some farmers still using them in the late 1950s.



Loading hay into rail trucks at Maitland Goods Yard 1950s

Road transport

With the advent of motor lorries also came a vast improvement in the quantity and quality of the state's road network. In 1945 the opening of the first road bridge over the Hawkesbury gave people of the Hunter, North Coast and North West regions a much quicker, easier road trip to Sydney. Road transport provided another option other than rail to get produce to the Sydney market. Road tax was imposed by the state government on some goods that were carted by road if they considered it to be in competition with the railways. Hay, potatoes, bagged pumpkins and onions, were therefore taxable. Fortunately the tax was removed in the late 1960s.



Where would farmers and the general public be without road transport especially during the present drought

COMMUNITY and FARMER ORGANISATIONS AND INDUSTRY GROUPS

Community Involvement

There is no doubt that in all the individual rural communities within the state there was, in the early days of the colony, a great deal of involvement in establishing certain facilities which the residents considered were needed for the betterment of their community. Thanks to their foresight and hard work we have inherited, and built on, many of those facilities and community groups that we still have today. In some areas it may have been schools, churches, school of arts or self-help community groups. Members of the rural community of Bolwarra Flats proudly represented the area in various ways with one prominent farmer, Mr Charles Bowden, serving as a councillor on the Bolwarra Shire for many years with more than two terms as the Shire President.

Bolwarra Public School

Bolwarra School was one of the first of 48 schools opened when the first system of education was set up in the Colony of New South Wales. It was closed in 1870 due to declining enrolments. As a result of the first sale of the Bolwarra estate in 1876, and followed by the residual sale in 1885, there was an increase in school aged children. It was reported in 1884 that "such well known families as Worboys, Cooper, Bowden and McArthur, (all Bolwarra farmers), applied to have the school re opened". The Inspector of Schools said no to the request. In 1889 they tried again as by this time more of Bolwarra Estate had been sold and businessmen from Maitland were finding Bolwarra a great place to live. Again the Inspector would not approve it. They were determined to have their school for the local children, and so 3 months later with the support of the local member, Mr Robert Scobie, they lodged another application. Unknown to them the Inspector again refused the request. According to the Worboys family history, within a day of Mr Scobie presenting the request to the Chief Inspector of Schools in Sydney, the four gentlemen being my grandfather George Worboys and great grandfather Charles Bowden together with Mr Cooper and Mr McArthur made an appointment with Mr Scobie, the Governor and the Chief Inspector of Schools in Sydney to discuss the request. To be able to do this they travelled overnight by paddle steamer from Morpeth. As a result of this personal and determined approach by the four men, the reopening of the school was granted and so impressed was the Governor with the way the deputation put forward their request, he also promised that Bolwarra School would reopen in a new and permanent school building. Eventually the newly constructed building was opened in 1891.

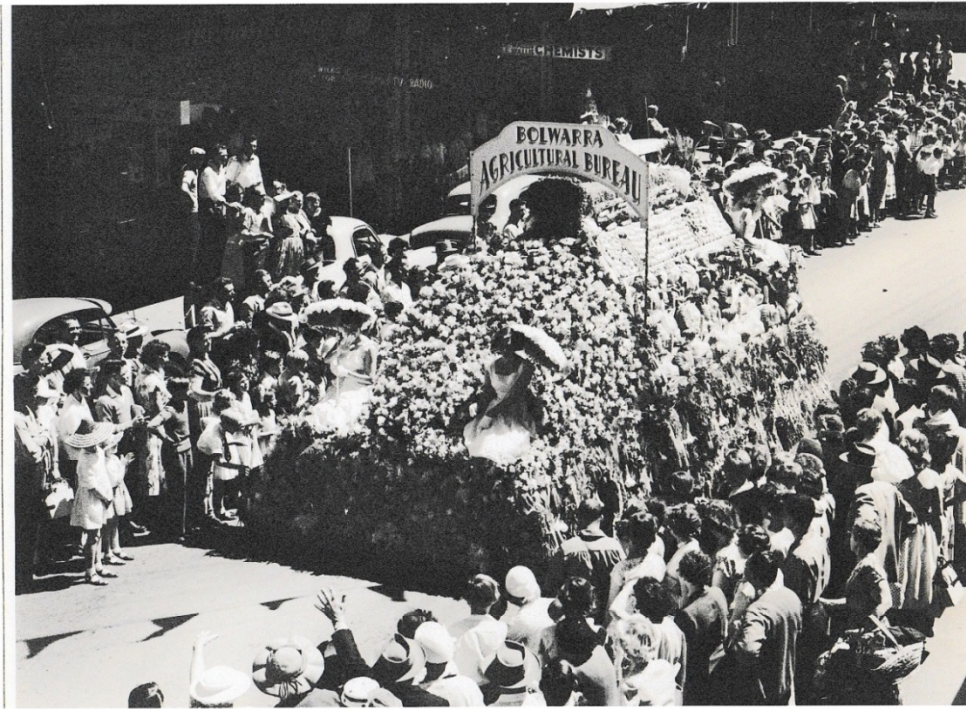


A painting by Mrs R Clarke of the two roomed school building which opened in 1891

Over many decades the school has been used as a meeting place for many groups within the community such as the following.

Bolwarra Agricultural Bureau

The local Bureau (as it was referred to) was affiliated with the NSW Agricultural Bureau. They were a self-help group of like-minded farmers whose aim was to assist all primary producers in a united front in the day to day matters that affected farmers across the State. The major function of the Bolwarra group from the 1940s to the 1980s was to source certified seed potatoes from bureau seed growers in Guyra and Crookwell. This buying, organising transport from the various growing areas all the way through to delivering and stacking the bags into each individual local grower's shed was undertaken by one local member. As the seed had been picked in Guyra and Crookwell when those towns still had snow on the ground, it was no surprise that it didn't take the potatoes long before they started to shoot ready for planting. Each Christmas the members would have a social function with a "show and tell" where they brought along their best potatoes, onions etc.



A 1959 procession in High Street Maitland with a float entered by the Bolwarra Agricultural Bureau



Members of Bolwarra Agriculture Bureau with their exhibit at Maitland Show 1924-1925. Left to right looking at the photo:

Back row: S Parish, R Kirkwood, H Hodges, A Jory, A R Mead, G Fairhall, S Masters, A Gordon
Front row: E Davey, S Kirkwood, C Fountain, L Mead, H Ling (Sec), A McKimm, F Blacktop, P Barry, H Wallis, C Bowden, H Mead.

The Bureau was a great supporter of the local show and at most annual shows they provided an exhibit which usually took the form of a large vegetable arch. Note the size of the half bales of hay in this exhibit

Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association

There is no doubt that farmers in all areas of Australia take pride in their farm and what they produce from them. Bolwarra farmers were no different with the Maitland Show providing a perfect opportunity to show off all manner of livestock including their draft horses, dairy and beef cattle and farm produce. Many farmers also provided their best for inclusion in the District Exhibit at the Sydney Royal.



A selection of prize ribbons from the Show



One of the trophies awarded in the ploughing competition

Many people who visited the Maitland area would comment on the patchwork quilt effect with the various colours of the different crops and the straight rows of vegetables. In conjunction with the annual show, ploughing competitions were held to test the ability of not only the

ploughman but the team effort of both man and horse combined. These competitions were a popular part of the annual show as it gave the local farmers the opportunity to show off their skills which they had perfected on their own farms in readiness for the event. As the

competition was a team effort made up of two horses and the ploughman it was important for them to work together on the day as any team does. With all the practice to get straight furrows it was no wonder that the rows of vegetables were always neat and straight. These competitions were taken very seriously by the ploughman and it was not uncommon for him to borrow a horse or two from the neighbours to make up the best combined team for the event.

Floods

The farmers of the Hunter Valley, as in other areas in Australia, are dependent on the local river to provide them with that valuable resource, water. He would be lost without water for Irrigation, stock watering and domestic purposes. Unfortunately too much water in the river systems of the Hunter Valley has on many occasions created some major flooding in the valley. This has in some instances caused destruction and loss of farm income for many months. In the flood of 1955 the farms situated on the river flats of the Lower Hunter and Paterson Rivers experienced devastating damage and loss of life during that event. That flood was considered to be the worst that the Hunter Valley has experienced. As a result of the '55 flood there are still some farmers around Maitland who, after 64 years, are still unable to work some of their land as it has been left with vast sand splays when the river burst its embankment. In some locations the deposit of sand is many metres deep and is unable to support weed growth let alone any useful vegetation.

Bolwarra Embankment Committee

The Embankment Committee was a group of farmers who banded together to combat the ravages of flooding on the Hunter River by working together to save their farms from flooding by installing embankments in low areas along the river bank. It is believed that the work of the committee commenced in 1847 when they filled some low areas to prevent minor flooding. Most of the work up to the 1950s was done using shovels and wheel barrows, horse and drays and horse drawn scoops. As a result of the enactment of The Hunter River Flood Mitigation Act of 1956, when the Government allocated 6 million pounds to carry out extensive measures to reduce the severity of flooding, meant that the work previously done by the Bolwarra Embankment Committee was now being done by the government. This in effect made the committee redundant. As a result the Bolwarra Embankment Committee was disbanded at a meeting held on 8th September 2004.



No bulldozers to help these Embankment Committee members repair flood damage in 1950

Bolwarra Drainage Union

The Drainage Union was also set up in each of the separate farming localities in the lower Hunter area. As the river flats tended to be very flat they would hold water after continual heavy rainfall resulting in flooding the crops with surface water. Most crops could withstand a day or so of this surface water but after that the crop was lost. They organised for the installation of a system of drains across the lower areas to allow this water to get away. These drains eventually discharged the water into the river through flood gates. As with the Bolwarra Embankment Committee, the drainage unions also ceased to operate when the Public Works Department took over the role of flood mitigation.

CONCLUSION

While putting this two-part article together I have been reminded of many things associated with what has been written which could possibly be considered as little titbits of information connected with each category discussed. Some of these are the trials and tribulations of farming that I have witnessed myself and heard discussed by the older farmers in the area. Some of these items were the result of climatic conditions and some events were possibly created by people themselves. It has given me a great opportunity to remember some of the good times of the past and how productive the river flats of the lower reaches of the Hunter were.

While writing this I was again brought back to that previously mentioned statement written by Harry Boyle AO more than 35 years ago when he said "The beautiful farming land of Bolwarra is only a shadow of its former glory when it was regarded as the food bowl of Sydney". I wonder what Mr Boyle's thoughts would be if he were to see the changes which have occurred as a result of present day trends to cater for the changing needs of the community.