

MAITLAND AND DISTRICT HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Notices to members and intending members:

1. Please find enclosed a slip of paper on which we would like you to indicate your preference as to time and place of meeting. Please return this to the Secretary, Geoff Cannon, as soon as possible.
2. Would anyone possessing information on Maitland's Jewish community, synagogue and graveyard please contact the Secretary.

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AN AUSTRALIAN IN CAMELOT COUNTY

by Henry Armstrong

A pub crawl in England is unlike its Australian counterpart. It is an ideal way of seeing England in all its antiquity and of trying to discern the many dialects spoken in the various counties. Thus it was in Somerset that I accidentally discovered the very real connection between the small village of my childhood in New South Wales and its sire in the Old World.

I was driving down a country by-way when I came to a pub called the "Hungerford Arms". Now in the Hynter Valley, Hungerford is not an uncommon name. These Hungerfords, I assume, are descendants of Captain Emmanuel Hungerford who purchased the old convict

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built homestead at Farley in 1836. This property has always been known as "Font Hill" although the Captain initially called it "Farley" after Farleigh Hungerford Castle in Somerset, the family seat of the Hungerfords, a powerful aristocratic family whose origins date back to the 14th century.

Actually my family and I had travelled across southern England to visit my only aunt. My mother had arrived in Australia as a war bride in 1919 from Bath in Somerset and so by a combination of luck and design I had stumbled on a very real connection between the Old World and the New.

What caught my eye in this beautiful little valley in the Green Hills of Somerset were the remnants of a formerly vast castle. Close investigation indicated that civil war had taken its toll although I was intrigued to find that the quaint stone thatched cottages, adjoining the castle on the river side, had been constructed from what had been the three metre thick walls of the castle. One way to cut down on building costs!

The family chapel however was in splendid order (maintained by the English National Trust) and some extracts from the family archives are of interest. For example, we read that the third wife of one particular Hungerford had been imprisoned by him in one of the towers of Farley Castle, with little to eat or drink. Her custodian was the villainous family chaplain who tried to poison her. (Unsuccessfully as history records the inhabitants of the nearby hamlet eventually released her.)

Lord Hungerford, the villain in the above episode, had been a friend and supporter of Thomas Cromwell and thus with the demise of the latter Farley Castle passed to the King for a time. Space prevents me from mentioning further episodes in the castle's colourful history albeit a sad one. However, the Chapel warrants some note as it perhaps explains why 'Font Hill' at Maitland is so named. The Hungerford Tombs are the most conspicuous feature of the chapel as the white marble effigies (life size) are regarded amongst the finest of their period in England. I went to the vault underneath the chapel and was saddened to see the lead coffins of six adults and two infants. The lead covering, over the centuries, had sagged upon the pathetic, little relics giving the vault a most melancholy aspect. I emerged to ponder on the equally sad sight of a wrecked castle and suddenly realised that its namesake across the seas had suffered the same fate. (Font Hill at Farley has been irredeemably

vandalised.) Incidentally in the chapel is an immense font used for family baptisms and I surmised that perhaps this may have resulted in Font Hill, Farley being so called.

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"A TRIP TO THE GREEN HILLS"

Taken from the Sydney "Gazette" of October 15th, 1831.

"Dear Sir, - It is delightful to escape occasionally from the dull monotony of Sydney and luxuriate for a while in the fresh air and healthful breezes of the country, its exercises and amusements of riding, shooting, swimming, boating, etc., to say nothing of fresh eggs, milk and cream, turkeys, fruits, vegetables and a host of little matters only to be obtained in town at great expense and inferior condition.

"I have visited nearly every port of the Colony, and although each place has its peculiar claims, yet I do not know a more pleasant excursion than that offered weekly by that beautiful steamer, the 'Sophia Jane'. Leaving Sydney about the usual hour for retiring to rest, you are quickly installed into a comfortable sleeping berth, and on awaking early next morning find yourself in the port of Newcastle, celebrated for its abundant supply of coals, and as the estuary of the Hunter's River.

"On landing at Newcastle some painful emotions are excited to find it in a ruinous and nearly deserted state, although a finer situation for a town, so far as regards health and scenery, can scarcely be conceived. It is now almost wholly possessed by the Australian Agricultural Company, and may be fairly estimated as their most valued possession, coals being now extensively consumed as fuel, and rapidly increasing in demand.

"Departing from Newcastle you glide rapidly into a spacious and beautiful bay, studded with numerous little islands thickly wooded to the water's edge, and abounding with pelicans, curlews, plovers, cormorants, ducks, teal, widgeons, sandlarks, and other birds; and the place may be seen where formerly prisoners were sent from Newcastle to burn lime as their punishment, and hence its name, Limeburner's Bay. From hence you proceed swiftly and majestically along the verdant banks of Hunter's River, adorned with the most luxuriant vegetation, and studded occasionally with the primitive abodes of new settlers and the temporary habitations of

parties of the aborigines, whose grotesque and singular appearance add not a little to the extraordinary nature of the scene. You reach Green Hills, where the steamer discharges her cargo into the store ship, "St. Michael", which affords the most commodious warehouse, being roofed in and divided into compartments for the reception of goods for the steamer, to and from Sydney, and at this place the passengers land and sally forth to their various destinations, filled with praise for the steamer and her skilful and experienced Commander, who, notwithstanding a brusquerie of manner, unites gentlemanly conduct with good seamanship and proper management. - I am, etc., 'Rambler.'

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MAITLAND MERCURY FILES

H.R.A. and H. Association - Origin of the Annual Show. Cont'd.

THE FIRST SHOW

The first show of the Hunter River Agricultural Society was held on Tuesday, May 14, 1844, in the yards and shed of the Albion Inn, West Maitland, a site now occupied by business premises opposite Galton's Ltd.

The schedule and prize winners at the first show were as follows:

(1) Colonial red wine - no exhibit; (2) Colonial white wine - no exhibit; (3) wheat - Mrs. Schofield; (4) English barley - Mrs. Turner; (5) Maize - C.M. Doyle; (6) leaf tobacco (colonial), 10lbs. - W. Holden; (7) Colonial cheese 50lbs. - Messrs. Reynolds and Parnell; (8) Firkin of butter (28lbs) - W. Geddes; (9) Colonial bred draught stallion - S. Clift's Young Farmer's Flory; (10) ditto hackney stallion - W. Nicholson's Harry Lorrequer; (11) ditto hackney mare - Doyle Bros. Victorine; (12) ditto bull - H. Dangar; (13) ditto breeding cow - H. Dangar; (14) ditto five heifers - E. Turner; (15) fat ox - no exhibit; (16) fat cow - E. Dangar; (17) five colonial bred rams - no exhibit; (18) ditto ewes - no exhibit; (19) colonial bred boar - E. Turner; (20) ditto cow - C.M. Doyle; (21) colonial made plough - P. Keppie; (22) ditto harrow - P. Keppie; (23) to the farm servant, male or female, who has been the longest period with one master, or mistress, and who can produce the best testimonial as to character - John Carroll, servant to C.M. Doyle; (24) to the person who pays the greatest attention to the appearance and comfort to his cottage and garden - no entry.

To the winner in each class a silver medal was awarded.

No sheep were exhibited and there does not appear to have been any wines shown. Mr. George Turner was an exhibitor of kip and sole leather manufacturing at his tannery at Yarrabong. Two small bundles of indigenous flax were shown by Mr.P.Keppie, of Paterson, which he gathered in the bush near Lewinsbrook.

Specimens of colonial earthenware were shown by Mr. King of Irrawang, near Raymond Terrace and Mr.E.Turner, of Yarrabong, exhibited a bundle of liquorice root from his garden. Some oranges grown by Mr.C.M.Doyle measured fourteen inches in circumference. Mr. Blair of Dunmore, showed a sample of pearl barley.

A debit balance of 510/2/11 was revealed in the treasurer's statement presented at the first annual meeting held in the Northumberland Hotel and presided over by Mr.Charles Reynolds, Vice-Chairman. The election of officers resulted: President, C.Reynolds; Vice-President, Edward Turner; Treasurer, R.Green; Secretary, P.Green; Committee, Messrs.C.M.Doyle, J.Portus; R.Reynolds; John Hickey; J.Reynolds, T.W.Tucker, and J.K.Wilson.

The second annual show of the society was held in the yards of the Hunter River Auction Company, opposite David Cohen and Co. Ltd. on January 27, 1845. The third show was held in the Albion Inn yard on April 15, 1846, and the fourth in the Hunter River Auction Company's yard on April 7, 1847.

Despite the enthusiasm of those who launched the Hunter River Society and its early success, the 1847 show was its last effort. At the dinner that night there were evidences of growing dissension between the wine growers and other men on the land. A meeting was called in August, but too few attended to form a quorum and it appears to have been the end of its activities. On May 19 of the same year a Hunter River Vineyard Association was formed, but it had no connection with the other body.

From the ploughing match held in Harbottle's paddock, near the Victoria Bridge on Friday, August 5, 1859 the Show Association as we know it to-day sprang.

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MAJOR CRUMMER, MAITLAND MAGISTRATE FROM 1849 UNTIL 1858

by Ron Montague

James Henry Crummer was an Anglo-Irishman who was commissioned as an ensign in the 28th (North Gloucesters) in 1805 when he was only thirteen years old. From 1808 to 1815 he fought in the Napoleonic War and was severely wounded three times, causing him to be lame for the rest of his life. After the war he went to Sandhurst Military College and then led a volunteer force to Greece to help in the Greek War of Independence. Here he met and married Katerina Plessos who was to bear him eleven children and was believed to be the first Greek woman to settle in Australia.

As a major in the 28th, Crummer arrived in Sydney in October 1835, with his wife and growing family. Almost immediately he was appointed a magistrate and sent to Newcastle as commandant and police magistrate. When his regiment left for India, Crummer decided to resign and settle in Australia. He began on a small farm which was insufficient to support his ever increasing family and ran into financial difficulties. His health deteriorated but was refused a pension because of the 'lapse of time'; he lost heavily during the depression of the 1840's. To afford him some relief he was given an appointment as paid magistrate at Maitland in place of E. Denny Day. Here he remained for nine years and acquired a reputation for being impartial and tolerant. He was known to be specially kind to 'old lags' to whom he was always ready to give a helping hand.

Although popular with the people he was not liked by the authorities who had him posted to Port Macquarie which was then something of an isolated outpost. He remained there until his death in 1867 at the age of 76, a sick, tired old man. Six local prison warders, who were old soldiers, fired a volley over his grave; this was the nearest to a military funeral that the government would afford.

Sources. Jour. of N.S.W. Mil. Hist. Soc. Vol XII No.12(1977)  
L. Burge.

James F. Kerr of High Street, West Maitland. The prisoners were removed by van from the West Maitland lock-up to East Maitland gaol, and, on arrival there, some 25 persons, including several of the leading medicos of the time, were present to see the effect of the castigation.

A triangle and horse (the new process) were erected at the rear of the gaol hospital. Cush was the first to taste the lash - eight strokes being his sentence. The youthful prisoner, during the process of strapping, cried bitterly, declaring his innocence of the charge on which he was convicted. When the first stroke fell on the bared skin his cries were agonising, and on the completion of the eighth stroke he fairly howled. The skin was uninjured, though flushed.

Hannigan was the next to be fastened down for torture. Though he bore his punishment well for a time, his flesh commenced to quiver after the fourth or fifth stroke, and he writhed from then on in extreme agony. His buttock was much swollen, and of a deep red color, but the skin was in no way broken.

Stapleton next made his appearance, and he appeared to dread the punishment, for no doubt he knew how his fellow prisoners had fared. Something more severe was in store for him, for in place of the leathern cat-o'-nine-tails a shipcord "cat" was used and twenty strokes were administered to him. Stapleton's back was completely bared and when the first stroke took effect he called out in agony. During the whole of the succeeding strokes he gave a succession of agonising screams and groans, and when relieved from his painful position had some difficulty in walking. His back showed signs of substantial punishment, and, though no blood was visible, yet, the "Cat" left black, blue and red traces in profusion.

After the flogging was over the prisoners were taken to the gaol surgery and were examined by Dr. Blackwell. The degrading nature of the punishment was keenly felt by each of the three prisoners - quite as much as the flogging itself. The whole sentence of flogging the three prisoners took about twenty minutes.

(From "Morpeth Times". February 18, 1884)

OLD MAITLAND by V.J.Goold, F.R.A.H.S.

(Reproduced from the Newcastle historical Society's archives and with kind acknowledgements to that Society.)

Historic old Maitland is one of the towns that provide a wonderful fund of interesting information regarding the early days of the Colony, for there are buildings standing to-day, both in West and East Maitland, that are reminders of the life and work of the early pioneers.

It was perhaps in the 'forties and fifties' that Maitland reached the pinnacle as a commercial town. As a matter of fact, at that period she ranked as the second town of importance in the Colony, being only surpassed by Sydney. Port Phillip (Melbourne) and Moreton Bay (Brisbane) were then only in their infancy.

Maitland's importance as a commercial town was attributed not only to the extensive wheat growing district surrounding the township, but also to the fact that it had the port of Morpeth, whence all wool and produce from the northern portion of the Colony was shipped. The exports from Morpeth in those days were considerable, it being estimated that the total exports from the Hunter River district in 1847 exceeded £300,000. In 1846, 9154 bales of wool to the value of £181,843 were shipped, and in 1847 10,032 bales to the value of £151,912. The same year tallow to the amount of 981 tons and valued at £20,237, was loaded at the Morpeth wharf.

An enthusiastic local resident (who was also a land salesman) in 1849 wrote: "The perceptibly growing mercantile and flourishing town of West Maitland; a town which in conjunction with her sister of the east, may be proud of the magnificence of her sacred edifices, her Courts of Judicature, her bank establishments, her splendid warehouses, etc... and situated in the midst of the most fertile district of the Hunter, encompassed by the splendid mansions of wealthy settlers and stockholders."

At the beginning of 1850 there were in West Maitland 652 houses; 288 of these were built either of stone or brick, and the remaining 364 being weatherboard. In East Maitland, there were 190 houses, 121 being of stone or brick and 69 of wood. With the exception of two, all these buildings were roofed with shingles, the exceptions being slated, one in the West and one in the East.

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