Bulletin of

Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

(Established March 1977)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society and

Museum and Galleries Hunter Chapter

Motoring Fashion (and more)

Volume 32, Number 2

May 2025

The Aims of the Society are to
Discover, Record, Preserve, Advise on and Teach the History of Maitland and the District

Cover: The image was supplied by the author.

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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.
Committee meetings are held on the third Tuesday of even months from 5:30-7.00pm.
General 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 : $25 (single) and $35 (double / family)

The rooms are open between 11 and 3 on Wednesdays and Saturdays.

Patron: Dr AC Archer AM

Current Office Bearers :

President : Kevin Short OAM **Vice President :** Janece Mcdonald
Treasurer : Jennifer Buffier **Secretary:** Steve Bone

Bulletin Editor : Lisa Thomas **Consultant Editor :** Kevin Short OAM

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

Editor's Notes:

For this Bulletin Judy Nicholson has contributed an article which examines the fascinating niche history of motoring fashions.

For the 18 October 2024 *Maitland Mercury* Our Past series Peter Woodley had written a biography of Henry Chamberlain Russell titled "Henry Russell: scientist, loved son of Maitland". For the Bulletin Peter has greatly expanded that biography: part 1 appears in this edition and part 2 will appear in August.

Jennifer Buffier has alerted us to something very exciting. Two Maitland history projects had been entered into the 2025 National Trust Australia (NSW) Heritage Awards and were subsequently shortlisted. Maitland and District Historical Society Inc was involved in both projects.

A full list of entries may be found on https://www.nationaltrust.org.au/news/nsw-awards-shortlist-2025. These awards are always hotly contested state wise.

The first project, listed under "Events, Exhibitions and Tours", was the 70th anniversary of the 1955 Maitland flood. This had been held at the Council Administration Building in February and March this year.

The historical society together with the Maitland Regional Museum, Australian Museum of Clothing and Textiles, Maitland Steam and Antique Machinery Association NSW, SES, Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Service and Local Land Services all collaborated with the Activations department of Maitland City Council to make this event successfully happen.

The Maitland and District Historical Society Inc. provided the photos and information in the second section of the exhibition which explained the cause, the event, the damage and resilience and restoration of the 1955 flood.

The second project was the book "Maitland in Focus", which was entered in the Resources and Publications category. As a member of the Maitland Heritage Group the Society assisted with fact proofing the publication.

In the final judging the "Maitland in Focus" book was highly commended and the 1955 flood exhibit took out the top state award in the "Events, Exhibitions and Tours" category.


2025
Heritage
Awards
NATIONAL
TRUST
2025
Heritage
Awards
Highly Commended
Resources & Publications
MAITLAND IN FOCUS
Maitland City Council
Justin Reeders (Photographer), Patrick Wilson (Editor),
Clare James (Maitland City Council)
NSW


2025 Heritage Awards
NATIONAL TRUST
2025
Heritage
Awards
Winner
Events, Exhibitions & Tours
FLOOD LEVEL 1955 - A HISTORICAL EXHIBITION
Maitland City Council
Australian Museum of Clothing and Textiles, Maitland Regional Museum,
Maitland and District Historical Society, Maitland Steam and
Antique Machinery Association, NSW State Emergency Service,
Hunter Valley Flood Mitigation Service, Local Land Services
NSW
GOVERNMENT

Left to right, Tara Stonestreet, of the Activities Office Maitland City Council, Janece Mcdonald, Jennifer Buffier

Ladies – start your engines!

By Judy Nicholson

Early motoring was not all glamour - unpaved roads resulted in clouds of dust that covered motorists' clothes in open top vehicles, so a loose-fitting outer coat became a practical necessity for clothes to remain clean. Ladies also used motoring hats and veils to keep the face free of unsightly contamination.

Were the ladies of Maitland part of the new motoring lifestyle? Absolutely, and they were well equipped for the ride!

Edwardian elegance


NEW SPRING GOODS.

THE

MISSES EDWARDS

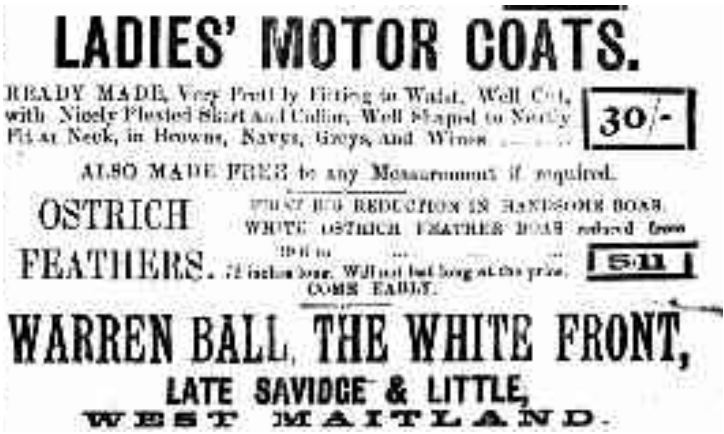
HAVE OPENED ALL THE LATEST SPRING NOVELTIES.

COLOURED CHIFFON VEILINGS, 6½d, 8d, 1/-.

NEW NET Do., 8½d, 10½d, 1/-.

As early as 1906 the Misses Edwards, the renowned supplier of elegant fashion, were advertising chiffon motoring veils

In 1907 ladies' ready made motor coats were being advertised.


LADIES' MOTOR COATS.

READY MADE, Very Prettily Fitting in Waist, Well Cut, with Nicely Pleated Skirt and Collar, Well Shaped to Neatly Fit at Neck, in Browns, Navys, Greys, and Wines 30/-

ALSO MADE FREE to any Measurement if required.

OSTRICH FEATHERS. FIRST BIG REDUCTION IN HANDSOME BOAS. WHITE OSTRICH FEATHER BOAS reduced from 20/6 to 5/11

72 inches long. Will not last long at this price. COME EARLY.

WARREN BALL, THE WHITE FRONT,

LATE SAVIDGE & LITTLE,

WEST MAITLAND.

Kerrs were also stocking ladies Sicilian motor coats 30 June 1909.

If a lady wished to sew her own outfit, Madame Weigel's paper patterns provided the essential tools.

This pattern for a lady's motoring coat first appeared in January 1906. Motoring hats and veils could also be created and Weigel's journal provided descriptions of motor coat materials to ensure they were rain, cold and dust proof whilst light in weight.

For those of you who are not yet acquainted with Madame Weigel, refer to *Historical Society Bulletin volume 28, no. 4, November 2021*.

The ladies of Maitland would have been familiar with Madame Weigel's business, thanks to the advertising columns of the Maitland Mercury.

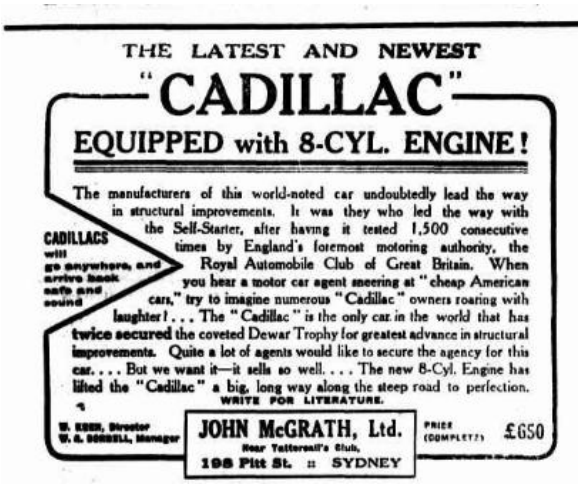
Poulton's regularly advertised that they stocked Weigel's journals of fashions and cut-out patterns, hence the motoring outfit patterns would be readily available at 307 High Street.

Edwardian motoring fashion became well established.

Perhaps you were being transported by one of Ern Carrington's vehicles from the Carrington Motor Company's fleet.

Source: The rise of High Street.

After (wealthy) you had been enticed by advertising in the Maitland Mercury of 23 October 1915 to purchase the Oakland or Cadillac, ladies were well provided for with appropriate garments from Maitland retailers.



James Kerr, the reliable outfitter, advertised

"Specially warm coats for motoring" in May 1914

The Grey Musquash (muskrat) declared a "Beautiful coat for motoring" in 1917

1920s adventures

Into the 1920s and your choice of motor vehicle could be a new Ford from Carrington Motor Co. in 1921 or in 1927 a Dodge supplied by Sim Brothers, Belmore Bridge.

If your budget did not stretch to the purchase of a motor vehicle, Maitland supplied a choice of several hire car options, depicted in the 1922 promotional publication, "With compliments, West Maitland". One of these is Les Waight's splendid Studebaker and note the Maitland Park gates standing in all their glory!

Of course, you would then be seeking appropriate 1920s garments for your motoring adventures and for ladies, this British fashion photograph of motoring and sports coats in 1924 provides an indication of acceptable motoring fashion.

Wood Bros., 'now in Compton's shop' could oblige with motor coats priced at 15/6 and 22/6 and their services also included dressmaking, 'at moderate prices that will please you' in November 1924.

As usual, Kerrs could provide items such as ladies' knitted motor coats at Kerr's big annual cash sale' in June 1925.

Chants offered Italian straw motoring hats, along with heavy assam silk motor coats, sale price 25/-, as well as new season's hats and frocks, in addition to a fine window display.

Tussore silk motor coats were advertised from February to May in 1926 by Chant & Co.

Seeking to acquire the sophistication of a Vogue illustration?

Do remember the importance of your gloves!

Yet again, Kerr's is your destination for motoring accessories, with gauntlet Nappa (lamb leather) driving and motoring gloves in 1929.

THE GLOVES AT KERR'S

Suggest dressiness and quality without being high priced. A good Glove always looks a good Glove—just that—

IN FABRIC GLOVES, beautiful shades in Lisle, Rayon, Silk and Rayon, Mixed and all pure Silk, are available in practically any price required, 1/11, 2/6, 2/11, 3/11, 4/6, 5/11, 6/11, 7/6 to 12/11.

KID GLOVES are particularly good in French and Belgian makes, Plain Kid and Suede, in most up-to-date Cuffs, Stitchings, etc. These are in Mastic, Tan, Fawns, Pastelles, Browns and Black, in one and two button or clasp, 8/11, 9/6, 10/11, 12/11.

LONG CUFF MOUSQUEHAIRE GLOVES, lovely soft Suedes in Tones of Champ, Pastelle, Fawns, and Grays, 10/11, 12/11, 14/11, 16/11.
ALSO IN NAPPED KID, Strap Wrist, 8/11, 12/11; Also 2 Button 6/11.
GAUNTLET NAPPA, 12/11. FRINGED CUFF NAPPA, 13/11.
GAUNTLET NAPPA DRIVING AND MOTORING GLOVES, 17/11, 21/-, 13/6.

Well, that is the glamour 'wish list' but a driving or motoring outfit for many ladies looked like this:

Amongst the amazing collection of the **Australian Museum of Clothing and Textiles** (AMCAT) - located just next door to the Historical Society at 1 Cathedral Street - features this driving or motoring outfit from the 1920s.

Described as: waist length jacket, gathered at waist with elastic inserted, shawl collar with ties inserted through loop at centre front.
Yoke with set-in 3/4 length sleeves with wide cuff.
Centre front opening to waist with 3 press stud closures.
Long skirt on elastic waist, 4 gores.
'T' shape patch pockets on side seams.

This garment can be viewed online at AMCAT's eHive site:

https://ehive.com/collections/206550/objects/2149730/driving-outfit

Women drivers!!

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Henry Chamberlain Russell: An Australian Life in Science (part 1)

By Peter Woodley

Prologue: January 1, 1901

As the hot, humid afternoon of December 31, 1900, gave way to evening, Sydney was in a suitably festive mood.
All around the city, colourful decorations and displays celebrated the Federation of Australia, set to be proclaimed the next day, 1 January 1901.

By late afternoon, the weather began to shift. Thick clouds gathered, and a gusty change swept through, bringing a sudden storm and a drenching downpour. Decorations were scattered, flagpoles toppled, and bunting lay in disarray. Across the city, fears grew that the great day might be spoiled by rain.

From his office at the Sydney Observatory, the New South Wales Government Astronomer, Henry Chamberlain Russell, issued a measured assurance. He predicted “fine weather for our natal day.”

Early the next morning, low clouds and distant thunder seemed to cast doubt on his forecast. But by the time the official procession began, the skies were clearing. A cooling breeze from the south stirred the flags and banners, and the day unfolded in bright, lively weather.

Russell, though he had always disclaimed the title of “weather prophet”, had predicted the day correctly.

It was a small but perhaps telling moment.
So, who was Henry Chamberlain Russell?

(Account based on Sherratt, 2001.)

A Life of Henry Chamberlain Russell

Born on 17 March 1836 in West Maitland, New South Wales, Henry Chamberlain Russell was the son of Captain the Hon. Bourn Russell and Jane (née Mackreth). He would go on to become one of Australia's most distinguished scientists of the late 19th century.
His contributions spanned a remarkable array of disciplines, including astronomy, meteorology, climatology, natural history, limnology, and tidal research.

Appointed Government Astronomer for New South Wales in 1870, Russell directed the Sydney Observatory for an impressive 35 years. During his tenure, he was instrumental in establishing and leading both national and international scientific programs. His efforts fostered collaboration within scientific networks and promoted innovation in science administration, meteorology, and climate research.

Russell’s achievements earned recognition from leading scientific organisations. He was a member of the Royal Society of New South Wales and a fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society (1871), the Royal Meteorological Society (1875), and the Royal Colonial Institute (1875).

Later, he was a founding member and president of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science.

In 1879, Russell chaired the inaugural Intercolonial Meteorological Conference, underscoring his commitment to advancing meteorological science. His election as a fellow of the Royal Society in London in 1886 was an acknowledgment of his scientific stature beyond Australia.

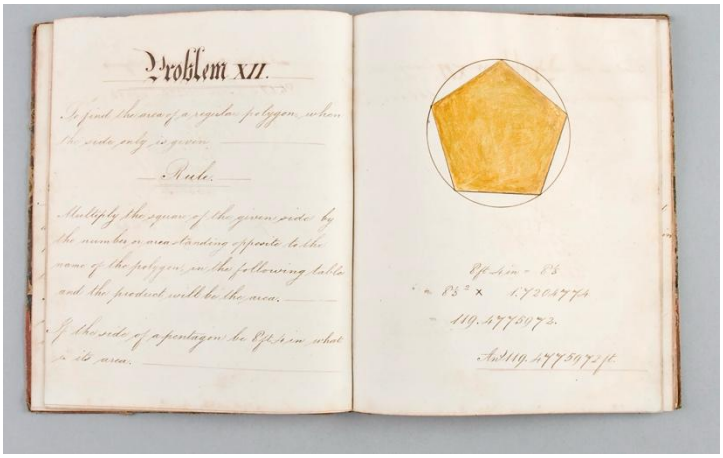
Beyond his scientific pursuits, Russell contributed significantly to the development of technical education in the colony. He served as vice president of the Board of Technical Education in 1883 and held the position of Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney in 1891 and 1892.

Russell's work was characterised by a keen awareness of emerging technological trends and their potential to expand scientific knowledge, particularly when applied in the colonial context. His advocacy for intercolonial and international scientific collaboration played a pivotal role in shaping a distinct Australian scientific identity, transcending colonial boundaries before the Federation.

In an era when Australia's scientific community grappled with geographical isolation and the challenges of understanding a vast and often harsh environment, Russell's vision and leadership left an indelible mark on the nation's intellectual landscape.

A Maitland Life

The Russell family played a foundational role in colonial Maitland's early history. Henry's father, Bourn Russell, spent the first part of his life as a naval seaman, mariner, and adventurer, leading by all accounts a colourful and sometimes chequered career before settling in West Maitland around 1834.
Bourn became an important figure in the commercial life of the district, though he was later bankrupted during the devastating economic depression of the 1840s. With seemingly characteristic capacity and self-belief, he rebuilt his fortunes, establishing a boiling-down works at Stoney Creek near Maitland, and profiting from pastoral and coal mining interests.
He also served as a member of the New South Wales Legislative Council from 1858 until his death in 1880.
Henry Chamberlain Russell grew up in this dynamic environment, attending West Maitland Grammar School under the direction of the Reverend William Colyer. Although glimpses of his early school life are limited, his academic record was strong enough to secure his entry to the University of Sydney.



Russell's school workbook (Powerhouse)

A more detailed portrait of Russell as a student emerges from his university records. Enrolled in 1856, he achieved a first-class pass in Mathematics and Physics in his first year, and second-class honours in Mathematics, Chemistry, and Experimental Physics in his second year.

When the *Sydney Morning Herald* published lists of the top five students in each subject in 1858, Russell was listed second in Classics, and first in both Mathematics and Natural Philosophy, and Chemistry and Experimental Physics.

With these outstanding results, Russell graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1859.

Among his fellow graduates were notable colonial figures such as Alexander Bowman, William Windeyer MA, Edward Hargreaves, and David Scott Mitchell MA, whose name would later be commemorated in the Mitchell Library.

Arriving At Sydney Observatory

When Henry Chamberlain Russell joined the Sydney Observatory as an assistant to Government Astronomer Reverend William Scott, he entered an institution that had navigated a faltering route to being central to the colony's scientific aspirations. Beyond its core functions of timekeeping and astronomical observation, the observatory was also responsible for meteorology, geomagnetic measurements, seismology, tidal studies, and surveying—reflecting its pivotal role in shaping colonial science policy and public perception.

The observatory's lineage dated back to 1788, when Lieutenant William Dawes established a rudimentary facility at Dawes Point, equipped with instruments supplied by Astronomer Royal Nevil Maskelyne.

This may not have been the first European observatory on the continent: a few days earlier, French astronomer Joseph Lepaute Dagelet, part of the ill-fated Lapérouse expedition, had established a temporary tent observatory at Botany Bay.

Although Dawes' work ceased in 1791, after a falling out with Phillip, the vision of a scientific observatory was revived in 1821 by Governor Sir Thomas Brisbane. With the assistance of Carl Rümker and James Dunlop, Brisbane founded the Observatory at Parramatta , which gained international recognition in 1822 when Rümker confirmed the return of Encke's Comet—a significant moment in the history of Southern Hemisphere astronomy.

Despite early successes, the Parramatta Observatory declined after Brisbane's departure and closed in 1848.
During the next decade , the NSW colonial government appointed Reverend William Scott in 1856, who arrived from England, to establish a new observatory in Sydney. Scott oversaw the construction of the observatory at its current location, initiated meteorological record-keeping, and promoted observational astronomy, including the 1857 solar eclipse. However, a note of subtle public criticism for his cautious style and unfavourable comparisons with amateur astronomer John Tebbutt—who had discovered the Great Comet of 1861—overshadowed his work. Scott resigned in 1862 and was succeeded by George Robarts Smalley who also arrived from England in 1864. Smalley's focus was on geomagnetic and tidal surveys, but his tenure was cut short by his death in 1870.

The Sydney Observatory c.1860? (SLNSW)
Russell's appointment as Government Astronomer in July 1870 marked a new era. As the first Australian-born director, he revitalised the Observatory by expanding its facilities and giving equal priority to both meteorological services and astronomical research. One of his most ambitious early projects was to re-catalogue the double stars of the Southern Hemisphere, building on the work of John Herschel. The program, when completed in 1893, led to the identification of around 500 new systems—an achievement that underscored Russell's scientific leadership in astronomy and affirmed Sydney Observatory's place in the global scientific community.

The 1871 Eclipse Expedition: A Missed Moment, A Lasting Legacy

A key chapter in Russell's scientific legacy is opened not only in his observational and theoretical work, but in his role as planner, administrator, strategist, and collaborator. His ability to organise scientific ventures and advocate for intercolonial cooperation reflected a growing sense that science would increasingly need a relationship with government , and this would later underscore the benefit of a national approach—

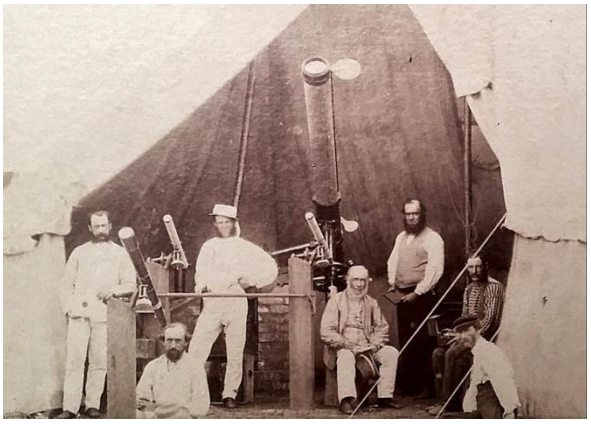
anticipating and then running parallel to the broader Federation movement beginning to take shape.

That evolution for Russell began in 1871, when in collaboration with Robert Ellery, Government Astronomer of Victoria, when he joined the Australian Solar Eclipse Expedition which ventured to Cape Sidmouth, off Cape York in Queensland
The expedition had been proposed by the Royal Society of Victoria, and from the outset it was clear that significant funding, planning, and cooperation would be required.

Solar eclipses offered unique observational opportunities—particularly with the emerging technologies of photography and spectroscopy. Astronomers hoped to study solar features, especially the corona, using new tools that allowed them to record and analyse light more precisely than ever before.

Russell played a central role in the expedition's logistics. He secured the use of the Queensland government steamship *Governor Blackall*, and designed timing instruments for the telescopes—a demonstration of both his practical inventiveness and growing administrative skill.

After assembling in Sydney, the party travelled north via Brisbane and selected a site in the Claremont Islands on 6 December 1871.
The New South Wales contingent included former Observatory director Reverend William Scott, photographer Beaufoy Merlin, and several naturalists, including Silvester Diggles and John Brazier.



The 1871 Eclipse Party

In the days before the eclipse, the team established their equipment and camps, while the naturalists collected natural history specimens.

December can be an unpredictable month at these latitudes, and despite the planning that had characterised the expedition, the party had not taken sufficient account of the weather. On the morning of the event, heavy cloud and rain obscured the sky. The long-

awaited eclipse passed behind clouds too dense for useful photographic or spectroscopic observation.

As the expedition packed up in disappointment, they were met by a passing schooner, *Matilda*, whose crew reported having seen the eclipse clearly, just north of their position.
It must have presented a realisation of a lost opportunity to the expedition party—and a practical lesson in the unpredictability of field science.

Despite the failure to record the eclipse itself, the 1871 expedition left a significant mark on Australian science.
It represented the first formal attempt at intercolonial scientific cooperation (Lomb 2016, quoting Hoare 1976), and became a model for the organisation and funding of future expeditions. The collaboration and regard that existed between Russell and Ellery, strengthened by the experience, would eventually lead to the creation of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1888, with Russell as its first president.

There were some scientific gains: the naturalists collected numerous specimens, and conchologist John Brazier discovered eleven new species of shells. Two were named in honour of Russell—*Helix (Conulus) russelli* and *Columbella (Mitrella) russelli*.
Photographs of the expedition, including those by Merlin, were also well received as documentary evidence of the practicalities of live observational science, and later circulated widely.

Even without capturing the eclipse itself, the expedition helped establish Russell not only as an observer, but as a scientific organiser, increasingly capable of shaping the infrastructure of Australian science.

The Astronomical Event Of The Century

When *The New York Times* described the upcoming 1874 Transit of Venus as the "astronomical event of the century," it captured the intense global interest in this rare and significant phenomenon.
A Transit of Venus occurs when the planet passes directly between Earth and the Sun, appearing as a small black disc crossing the solar face. The event's rarity — occurring in pairs eight years apart every 105 or 121 years — made it compelling. But it was its scientific potential that truly energised observers.

By measuring the parallax — the apparent shift in Venus's path from different locations on Earth — astronomers hoped to determine the astronomical unit: the distance between Earth and the Sun, and by extension, the scale of the solar system. This was

convincingly demonstrated by the astronomer Edmond Halley in 1716, which effectively galvanised worldwide scientific community.

The first transits to be observed seriously occurred in in 1761 and 1769. The 1761 transit attracted an international burst of activity as scientific expeditions from Britain, Sweden, France, Russia, America, many experiencing severe privations and demonstrating feats of ingenuity to set up observation stations , took part in what was perhaps one of the world's first "global' events. 8 years later, the 1769 Transit provided a rationale for sending James Cook to Tahiti to carry out observations, after which a packet of instructions directed him to seek ' a Continent of great extent' and to take possession.

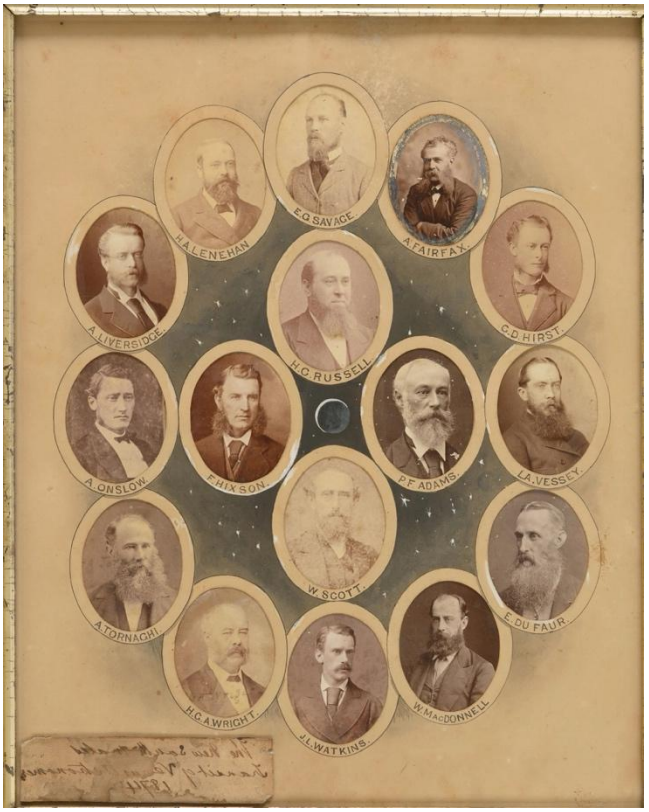
Despite massive effort, results had been inconclusive, largely due to the difficulty of precisely timing the moment of Venus's ingress and egress on the solar disc.

Russell, newly appointed Government Astronomer in New South Wales, was determined that the 1874 transit would showcase the colony's capacity to contribute meaningfully to international science. Writing of his predecessor, perhaps with a touch of rebuke , Russell said _ *"…In August 1870, Mr G.R Smalley…Government Astronomer for New South Wales died having taken no steps to prepare for the Transit of Venus observations. He had , indeed, expressed his intention of taking no part in the work…"* _

Russell upon assuming the position _*"…at once took steps to prepare for the great astronomical event…"*_*(Russell 1892)* The result of Russell's decision , exemplified Russell's ability as an organiser, observer, lobbyist and project manager

He successfully lobbied the NSW government for £1,000 in funding — a substantial sum — arguing that the colony's participation would "give honour to the colony and advance the cause of science." With the funds, his principal acquisition was 29.2 cm Schroder refractor telescope.

Russell personally oversaw the logistics of site selection, equipment housing, observer training, and photographic processes. Four observation teams were established: at the Sydney Observatory, Woodford, Goulburn, and Eden, as a precaution against precaution against cloud cover interfering with observations.



The 1874 Observation Party

Despite excellent preparation, the fundamental observational challenge remained: interpreting the precise contact points between Venus and the Sun's disc. Even small errors in timing, to the point of mere seconds, affected the final calculations. As with earlier transits, the resulting data varied more than anticipated.

Still, Russell's efforts were widely acknowledged. When he presented New South Wales' results to the Royal Society in London, they were among the most highly regarded. His leadership not only elevated his own reputation internationally but also demonstrated that colonial science could credibly participate in the work of the global community.

(end of part 1)