Bulletin of

Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

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Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society and

Museum and Galleries Hunter Chapter

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

Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

> **Cover:** Enright's Solicitors, 467 High Street, Maitland

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 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 : $15 (single) and $20 (double / family)

  Bulletin contributions are being sought. Please contact the Society via email

    maitlandhistorical@gmail.com

Petite Properties – Enrights Solicitors

Located at 467 High Street, Maitland, the Enrights Solicitors building has a narrow frontage but Pender's design ensures this relatively small building does not go unnoticed.

Enrights Solicitors was established by W.J. (Walter John) Enright on 3 October 1896. Mr. Enright had graduated from the University of Sydney becoming fluent in French, Italian and German. He also learnt two local aboriginal dialects. He became Mayor of Maitland in 1906 and Chairman of the Maitland Hospital Board in 1912. W.J. Enright practised on his own behalf until 1925 when he was joined by Henry Thomas Skilton and the firm became W.J. Enright & Skilton.
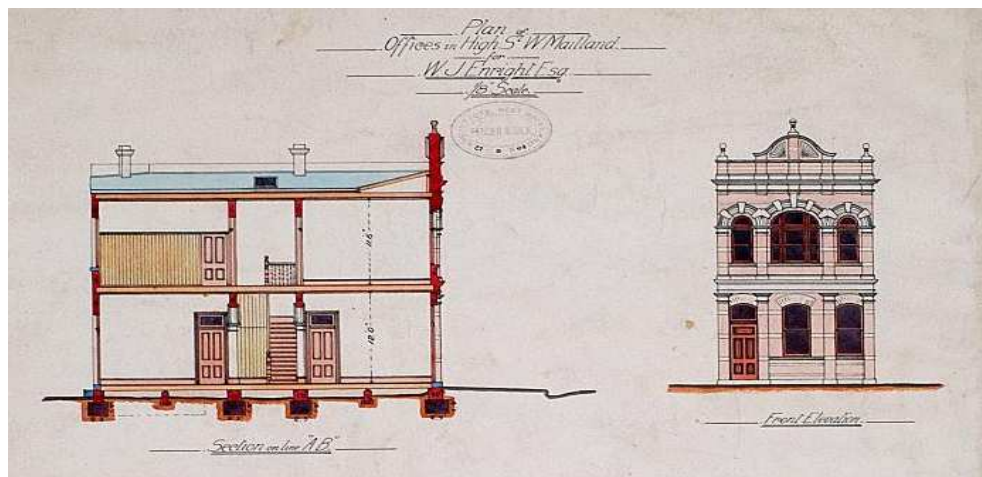
Enright's son, came to work in the practice. Upon Tony's admission in 1942, and the departure of Henry Skilton into sole practise, the firm became known as W.J. Enright & Son. In 1981 Tony Enright resigned from the partnership to take up a lectureship in law at the University of Newcastle.

W.J. Enright

In 1999 the firm was renamed Enrights Solicitors. Over one hundred years of legal practice has operated in Maitland under the Enrights name.
"Our heritage listed building was commissioned from local architect J.W. Pender and built in 1908, with Mr. Enright's office overlooking the street and the ground floor occupied by a bank, fitted with upstairs and downstairs fire safes."
http://www.enrights-solicitors.com.au/

Pender's plans for Enright's offices have been sourced from the Pender Archive at the University of Newcastle

http://libguides.newcastle.edu.au/pender

Clift's cottage

The previous edition of the Historical Society Bulletin (August Vol. 21, no. 3) highlighted some anomalies regarding the date that Clift's cottage was built. Thanks to AEnone McRae-Clift, great-great-great granddaughter of Samuel Clift, the following corrections were provided: Samuel arrived in the Colony in 1818 (not 1809 as stated) aboard the "Neptune 1".
Clift's cottage was built c. 1826.

William Thomas Mitchell Esq. (1807-1877)

Introduced at the Guest Speaker Evening in September by Val Rudkin, **William Thomas Mitchell** was an almost unknown subject.

Whilst researching other men associated with the history of Maitland, Val noticed this name often appearing in the pages of the *Mercury.* This led her to believe he was a man of some importance and most likely had connections to the other Mitchells in the district. However, a different picture emerged when she took a closer look.

William Thomas Mitchell was born in Ireland about 1807. He was convicted at Dublin of a crime and on 1 August 1831 was given a life sentence to be served in the Colony of New South Wales. He arrived at Sydney on the *Roslin Castle* in 1833. On 19 April 1842 he was granted a ticket of leave. On 14th April 1847 he married Jane Tumeth at Windsor. On 30th July 1847 was granted a conditional pardon after completing his fourteen year sentence.

William Mitchell was able to read and write, which implies he received some education. He was a skilled cabinet-maker who saw his future in the growing township of West Maitland. Here he settled with Jane and established himself in business as cabinet-maker, upholsterer and undertaker. The first mention of W. T. Mitchell was as a householder on the list of electors within the Maitland District. He made and sold coffins to the Maitland Hospital and it was recorded in the *Mercury* that he was paid £3 2s 9d by the Hospital for coffins in 1847. The *Mercury* reported that he had charged William Ellis under the Masters and Servants Acts after Ellis failed to complete a cabinet he was employed to make in May 1850. The following month his name was included as the undertaker for the funeral notice of Mrs. R. P. Forster in the *Mercury.* From these items we can establish that William Thomas Mitchell became a resident of Maitland in the year 1847.

It soon became evident that W. T. Mitchell was not a man to stand on the sidelines of community affairs. His name was associated with various causes including support of the Irish exiles. He sat in the first Municipal Council of West Maitland, being several times re-elected and was the treasurer for the Maitland Racing Club and other organisations. He served on the Maitland Hospital Committee. He became a Justice of the Peace and later became a Magistrate who was considered remarkable for his conscientious performances. He was a highly popular man who kept his own council and held his own views firmly and honestly.

So, when it was said earlier that he was a man of some importance, he was, and though this can be said of many men of his time, it has to be remembered that W. T. Mitchell arrived in the colony as a convict. He had very little with which to start and his progress was of his own making.

He was able to purchase land fronting High Street in Maitland and one of the buildings he erected still stands today. In March 1854 he offered for sale through Mr. Alex Dodds, 72 building allotments. Fourteen of which fronted High Street and averaging from 22 to 24 feet by a depth of 100 feet, with the advantage of having a back road to each of the front allotments. The remaining 58 allotments fronted the two streets, each 40ft wide, named Victoria and Albert Streets. These two streets ran direct from the High Street to the racecourse and each had frontage to Victoria and Albert Streets of 33ft by a depth of 100ft. This land had been surveyed by G. B. White, Esq., land surveyor, with the greatest skill and assiduity to meet the views of all intending purchasers.

Whilst some of the allotments on Victoria and Albert Street were sold, the lots fronting High Street did not sell as well. In 1858 advertisements appeared in the *Mercury* showing that W. T. Mitchell had erected two separate commercial premises. One of the buildings was erected on land now occupied by the Administration Office of Maitland City Council, and was known as The Commercial Exchange Building and also referred to as Mitchell's building. The first tenants of the Commercial Exchange were draper, William Attkins and solicitor, William Henry Mullins.

An advertisement in the *Mercury* on Saturday 16 October 1858 declared "The Greatest Attraction in Maitland - that splendid range of business premises just completed by W. T. Mitchell, Esq., and known as The Commercial Exchange buildings." Who was responsible for that notice is not clear but it exemplified the importance of the buildings to the township at the time.
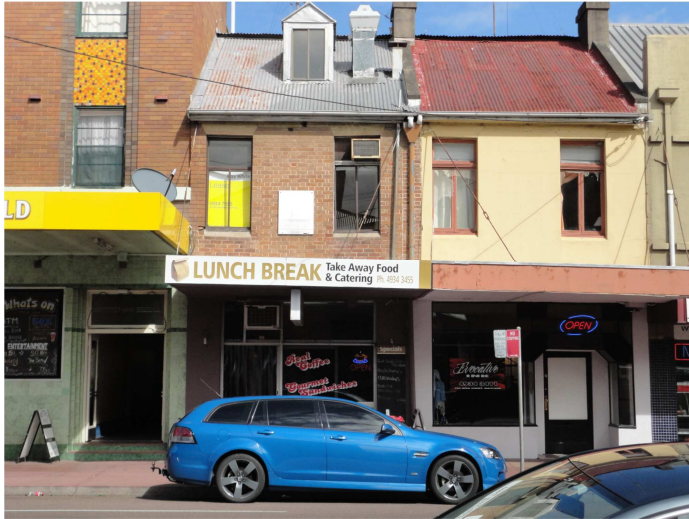

The second buildings erected by W. T. Mitchell were on High Street, directly opposite to Kellerman Brothers & Co's stores and the Maitland Mercury. This was known as Mitchell's Arcade and the shops and residences occupied the area from Victoria Street to the site of the Metropolitan Hotel.

The section of High Street where W. T. Mitchell erected his buildings.

The 1878 Municipal Council of Maitland rates listing showed six shops and residences owned by the Trustees W. T. Mitchell, from the corner of Victoria Street adjoined by an inn occupied by James Grogan, on the site of the Metropolitan Hotel. This section would have been "Mitchell's Arcade Buildings." The next section on the rate listing showed four shops and residences owned by J. Fullford. These are considered to "The Commercial Exchange Buildings." The adjacent shop and residence were owned and occupied by James Bromhead, a hairdresser. The next building was the inn occupied by George Raymond Pidding. The inn was later demolished to make way for the Maitland Town Hall.

William Thomas Mitchell died in 1877, but more will be told about this man in the next Bulletin.

Val Rudkin

Part of Mitchell's Arcade building which can still be recognised today.

The Commercial Exchange. Premises of Oscar W. Wink as advertised in the *Mercury*
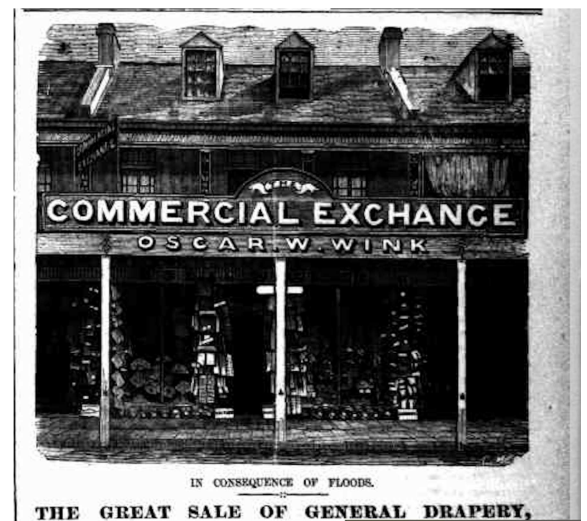of 25 March 1871. The building appears to have a shingle roof.

Photo during 1893 flood shows people crowded on the roof of the colonnade of Mitchell's Arcade building.

The lure of whisky led to gaol and a flogging

*The following article by **Peter Bogan** was published in the Maitland Mercury, 10 September 2014, as part of History Week.*

In the early 1880s the NSW Legislative Assembly enacted laws to permit flogging in certain cases of perceived hooliganism. The Mercury reported on such a case in 1884. The report read:

About 10pm on a Sunday evening a number of youths knocked on the door of James Kerr's Adelphi Hotel claiming to be travellers and asking to be served. Kerr admitted the group and started to serve the requested drinks at the bar, he then heard someone running through the back and noticed three bottles of whisky missing.

Kerr woke his lodger Henry Clarke and they ran down Devonshire Street to a paddock and found the group who had run out of the pub. A brawl took place with punches and bricks thrown and Kerr and Clarke jumped some fences and went back to the pub. The Adelphi was on the eastern corner of High and Devonshire Streets.

Next morning Kerr reported the incident to the police and the group was arrested and taken before the bench where Michael Stapleton was sentenced to ninety six hours in gaol and twenty lashes, Henry Hannigan and William Cush to the same hours and eighteen an eight lashes respectively.

At the gaol "The triangle and horse were erected at the rear of the hospital. Cush was strapped to the horse, a leather band placed around each arm and leg and his buttocks exposed. A strap containing nine thongs was used. In Cush's case the punishment was not severe owing to his youth. He appeared to suffer the chastisement keenly.

Hannigan was then lashed to the horse, a strong robust fellow he at first appeared unconcerned, but after the leather was applied three or four time he flinched and appeared to suffer pain. His buttocks were very much marked, though there was no breaking of the skin.

Stapleton was strapped to the triangle and his back was bare. The instrument used for the infliction of punishment in his case was the real cat-o-nine tails, made of whip cord with knots in the lower end. The stroke were rather severe and S. uttered a succession of groans, the cat was laid on the back and by the last stroke the skin was very much contused, though there was no actual cut apparent. One of the tails struck him under the jaw."

The Mercury "hoped the castigation of the three young fellows will have a beneficial effect on their future lives and conduct, and that it will act as a warning to others."

Peter Bogan

Narrowgut

'Narrowgut' – what? where?

The area known as **Narrowgut** was first referred to in the Maitland Mercury on 6 January 1894:

A Toll Declared.— The Gazette of yesterday says Narrowgut, on the road Morpeth to Largs, has been proclaimed a place at which tolls may be collected.

SALES BY AUCTION.

INSOLVENT ESTATE

OF

F. T. MURPHY,

OF

Narrowgut, near Morpeth.

J. ENRIGHT has received instructions from the Official Assignee to sell by auction, at Narrowgut, on SATURDAY, March 3rd, 1894, at Eleven o'clock, on the premises of the above, FARMING STOCK AND CROPS, Dray, Plough, Harrow, Roller, Horse Rake, 3 Pigs, Dray and Plough Harness, Lucerne Crop, Corn Crop, Hay in shed, 10 Pairs Fowls, Saddle, Bridle, &c., &c.

Terms cash.   580

Again in 1894 this notice for an auction sale on 24th February 1894 provides a good description of the crops and equipment of an 1890s farm property.

But Narrowgut's days commenced well before the Mercury references and have been noted by local historian the late **Harry Boyle**, with Harry's text reproduced below. There is no date on Harry's typed document and the article may have been published in the Maitland Mercury or elsewhere at some time. The article has been re-typed verbatim:

> Once one of the most intensely farmed areas of the Lower Hunter, Narrowgut today is only a shadow of its former importance as a rural producing area.
>
> Lt. E.C. Close was most leniently treated by the government, much better than many others when they found the land they had chosen unsuitable and were forced to put up with it. Lt. Close however on complaining that the land he had chosen turned out to be a useless sandstone ridge (today the town of Morpeth) and the swamp behind was given a similar acreage alongside which included the farmlands he desired.
>
> On the 19th April 1825, he wrote to the government stating that alongside his estate were two long points formed by the sinuosities of the river containing about 260 acres and that he wished to purchase the land. The government agreed to sell him this area for £187.50. The

area was called Narrowgut. Although the law stated that no settler could own more than one mile of river frontage, Close now owned over five miles.

Narrowgut, or pinchgut, was a naval term and would not be applicable to a narrow river. The name was most likely a corruption of the aboriginal name for the area, Narragan.

By 1840 Narrowgut was intensively farmed, every inch of the land was cultivated mostly with a hoe. Many families received their start here; most of the farms were from five to ten acres and the farmers were tenants of Close.

Lt. Close died in 1866 and the area passed to his son, E.C. Close who on 20th February 1866 sold some of the farms claiming it to be the best lucerne growing land in the area.

The farmers on Narrowgut at this time were: Michael Casey, Thomas Nowlan, William Hayes, Eli Hain, Earl J. King, Michael Hawley, Edward Showsmith, George Blundell, P. R. Haydon, D. J. Campbell, Charles Johnson, Charles Newman, F. G. Roberts, Michael O'Brien, W. Hicks, Lachlan McFaydn, Thomas McCaffery, Isaac Pillidge, William Qinn, John Bowe, Matthew Murphy, Charles Stevens, John Sucker, J. W. Egan, Michael Hickey, Thomas Cleary, Thomas McGaraty and Francis Murphy. Twenty nine farmers on 250 acres.

By the turn of the century the number had fallen to seventeen. These were: George Blundell, Thomas Cleary, Patrick Flanagan, John Harden, James Hickey, Michael Hickey, Thomas Hickey, Michael Hoban, Elizabeth Murphy, Patrick McCarthy, John McFadyn, Dennis Nowlan, Michael O'Brien, Isaac Pillidge, Patrick Smith and George Standen.

HUNTER RIVER, MORPETH.

CLOSE'S ESTATE.

PERMANENT TRUSTEE CO. OF N.S.W., LTD., TRUSTEES.

Important Sale of Fertile Alluvial Farming Lands.

TORRENS TITLE. · EASY TERMS.

WITH FRONTAGE TO THE HUNTER RIVER.
NAVIGABLE BY OCEAN-GOING STEAMERS.
Comprising Well-Improved and Highly Cultivated Lucerne, Maize, Broom Millet, and Potato Lands. Also Rich Dairy and Grazing Farms and High Residential Lots, out of Flood Reach.
All adjacent to the Morpeth Railway Station and Wharf.
All Provided with Good Roads of Access.
Vendors: THE PERMANENT TRUSTEE CO. OF N.S.W., LTD., 25 O'Connell-street, Sydney.
This Well-known and Valuable Estate has been Subdivided into Handy Areas, and will be submitted to
PUBLIC AUCTION, ON THE GROUND,
ON SATURDAY, 30th OCTOBER, 1920,
AT 2 O'CLOCK SHARP.
TORRENS TITLE. TERMS, 10 PER CENT. DEPOSIT.
5 Per cent. on each October 1 and April 1 in each succeeding year until balance of purchase money is paid. INTEREST, 6 per cent.
POSSESSION 1st JANUARY, 1921.

KING & HUMPHERY, 121 PITT-STREET, SYDNEY.
CARR BROTHERS, HIGH-STREET, WEST MAITLAND.
AUCTIONEERS IN CONJUNCTION.

SOLICITOR: H. DE Y. SCROGGIE, CASTLEREAGH HOUSE, CASTLE-REAGH-STREET, SYDNEY.
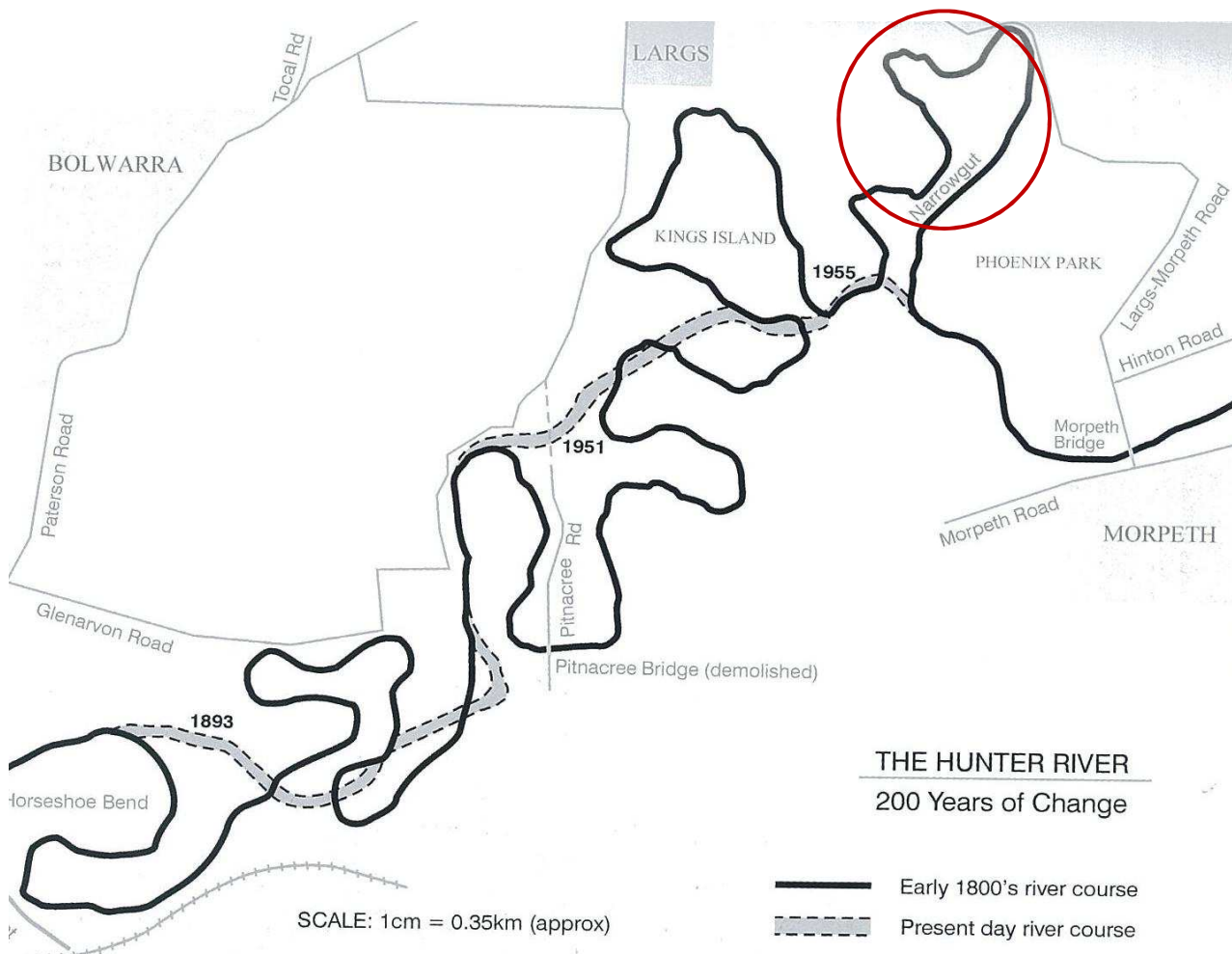PLANS AVAILABLE ON APPLICATION. 6943

On 30th October 1920, the Close family cut their ties with Morpeth selling at public auction the four remaining lots on Narrowgut.

Maitland Mercury 15 October 1920

Floods caused many changes. The flood of 1890 (not 1893) caused the river to change its course and washed away much land removing the river about one mile from the village of Largs. Where it used to be can be seen by the old river bed. It again changed its course in the 1940s, cutting Narrowgut in two.

The facilities that these families supported such as businesses, schools and churches sadly missed their patronage. The train they used for transport, to take their children to school, to go shopping, no longer runs. Today this once busy farming area looks deserted but it has spread good strong families in the Hunter Valley community.

Harry Boyle

THE HUNTER RIVER
200 Years of Change

SCALE: 1cm = 0.35km (approx)

———— Early 1800's river course
- - - - - Present day river course

Source: Maitland on the Hunter, Brian Walsh & Cameron Archer, 2007.

The area of Narrowgut as pictured courtesy of Google maps, accessed October 2014

Family history research

Historical Society member and genealogist **Maree Farrelly** was the speaker at the Society's June 2014 guest speaker evening.

Maree's talk identified the key information resources for family history research and she has kindly allowed these to be listed below, as well as a basic chronology of Hunter Valley European settlement.

These resources are available from the collection of the Maitland Historical Society and/or Maitland City Library Local Studies collection:

Basic timeline of European history in the Hunter Valley

1804 – first permanent settlement at Newcastle – primarily convicts and government officials but also miners, timber workers, etc.

1814-1818 – settlement mainly by ex-convicts, ex-soldiers of the Napoleonic wars and some free settlers in the Maitland, Paterson and Wollombi areas.

1818 – government and convict settlement at East Maitland in the heights overlooking what is East Maitland Glebe Cemetery.

1829 – first official map of Maitland (what is now East Maitland) showing roads, etc.

1840s – Maitland area rivals Sydney in terms of population and business

1850s onwards – Newcastle develops with shipping, mining and business. Maitland business is still

prosperous supplying the local area plus developing areas in the west and north-west of New South Wales

Books

- Dawn in the Valley
- Newcastle as a convict settlement
- Settlers of the Paterson district
- Mines, wines and people
- Hunter's River
- Historical records of New South Wales
- Historical records of Australia
- Musters
- 1828 census
- 1841 Hunter Valley directory
- Land grants, leases and purchasers 1792-1865
- Butts and certificates of the first publican's licenses 1830-1860

Folders   (Maitland City Library)

- Harry Boyle collection
- Andrew Burg collection

Microfiche and microfilm   (Maitland City Library)

- Maitland Mercury
- State records – Colonial secretary, shipping, probate, inquests, convicts, naturalization, etc.
- Hunter Valley hotels and hotel licenses
- Church records pre 1856

Newcastle Region Library

- 1788-1820 association – books
- Settlers of the Hunter Valley 1821-1831 – University Thesis
- Folders on all areas of the Hunter including Maitland

Websites

- National Library of Australia http://www.nla.gov.au/
- National Archives of Australia www.naa.gov.au
- State Library of New South Wales http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/
- State Records of New South Wales www.records.nsw.gov.au
- Trove – digitized newspapers (includes early papers such as The Australian and Sydney Gazette) http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper
- New South Wales Registry of Births, Deaths and Marriages http://www.bdm.nsw.gov.au/
- Other states of Australia – libraries, archives, museums, historical societies
- Overseas – such as National Archives (England), Library of Congress (United States), Family search.org (Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints)
- Local History Newslink - http://localhistorynews.blogspot.com.au/

Coach tragedy part of our history

*The following article by **Peter Bogan** was published in the Maitland Mercury, 11 September 2014, as part of History Week.*

From the files of the Maitland Mercury on Thursday, May 1892 – 'Accident to the Dungog Mail Coach'.

On Monday last the Dungog to Maitland mail coach driver James Brereton left Dungog around 2.30pm and after picking up mail at Seaham, Clarence Town and Glen Oak, arrived at Hinton Post Office, in Paterson Street, about 9pm with 5 passengers and 14 bags of mail.

Two men were on the box and one inside with a woman and her son. Soon after the coach left the Post Office the leading reins got caught up in the leading bar and the driver had to alight to fix them. Then, soon after as the driver pulled to one side to pass a buggy ahead of him, the wheels of the coach struck a culvert near Watson's store.

The driver was thrown off and the horses bolted down towards the punt, came into the punt yard, onto the punt, straight through the punt and into the river.

The male passengers managed to escape but 48-year-old Emily Cross and 7-year-and-10-months-old son David were drowned. Bodies were recovered when the coach was pulled from the river about 3am Tuesday and bodies were locked together with the boy cradled in his mother's arms. Three horses also drowned.

Mails recovered were taken by Morpeth Postmaster Mr. C. F. Wakely and dried out. One bag contained £600.

Mr. J. N. Brooks, Coroner, held an inquest at M'Carthy's Victoria Hotel where John William Storey, punt man, stated: "I first saw them coming through the big gates in the punt yard the speed was terrific, and they came on the punt without checking themselves, and I went to close the outer punt gates; I undid the right hand gate, and sprang across to the other gate, and then the leader of the coach rushed past me, and all went into the water."

Joachim August Tronier, an artist from Balmain, who was on the box with the driver stated, "the driver was perfectly sober, and was a good and careful man."

Evidence was also taken from Dr Oscar Bloch, who had been inside the coach, Dr Frank Albert Bennett from Morpeth, Senior-constable John Ritchie of Morpeth and George Cross of Dungog, husband and father of deceased.

Jury found: "The driver was not to blame."
Victoria Hotel still stands on corner of Hinton road and Old Punt Road.

Peter Bogan

Trivia night

The Society's Trivia Night was held on 23 August 2014, at the Polish Hall in Grant Street, Maitland, and proved to be a social and financial success.

Thanks go to Quiz Master Kevin Short, dressed formally in tails, and Scorer Ziggy Szyda dressed in Polish National costume, for outstanding presentation making the evening run so well.

Donations for prizes, supper, assistance in setting up the hall, clearing up afterwards coming from many members was wonderful. Preparation prior thanks go to Keith and Adele, Liz and Dennis, Steve, Bill, Peter and Lindsay. Thanks to Anne, Tom and Bill for being on the welcome table and to Peter for your lamp invention, excellent for historical prize for the raffle.

Helen Denzin

Diary Dates 2014

Sunday 14th December – Christmas Party at Bill's!

Everyone is cordially invited to our **Christmas gathering** which will be held at Bill Sutherland's home 342 Old North Road Lochinvar. This is a wonderful social gathering to meet fellow members and families who we do not normally get to meet. Tables and cloths provided please bring everything else that you need, food, chairs, drinks.

For the members who have not been to Bill's before he has a restored railway carriage in his back yard which will be open for us to inspect.

Time of commencement will be advised by email.

Victoria Bridge

Spanning Wallis Creek, Maitland
Linking East and West Maitland
(1852-1896)