

Maitland and District Historical Society Inc.

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: Wolstenholme Memorial, unveiled January 1913 – see page 9.

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Location: 3 Cathedral Street Maitland (opposite Bishop's House)

Lecture meeting - first Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7.00pm
Business meeting - the third Tuesday of each month from 5:30-7.00pm
3 Cathedral Street Maitland

Patrons: The Hon. Milton Morris AO

NSW Member for Maitland 1956-1980
NSW Minister for Transport 1965 – 1975

Most Reverend William Wright

Bishop of Maitland-Newcastle

The Historical Society are pleased to welcome Bill Wright as a patron

President : Keith Cockburn

Vice Presidents : Peter Smith, Ruth Trappel

Treasurer : Kevin Short



*The Committee of the Maitland
and District Historical Society
would like to wish you a joyous and
safe Christmas and New Year.*



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The Maitland Branch of the Country Women's Association in World War II

At the outbreak of the Second World War a group of Maitland women with no specialist training or experience resolved to do whatever they could for the war effort. In this year in which the world has observed seventy years since the end of World War II, it is appropriate to remember the many contributions of the Maitland Branch of the Country Women's Association to that war.

As Mrs. S. (Minnie) Parish, who was Branch president in the 1950s and 1960s, wrote in 1979 on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of the Branch, "The outbreak of the 1939-1945 world war brought not only anxiety to many people but also a strong desire to assist our country's war efforts in whatever way possible." In the following years many of the 80 or so Branch members adapted their social and domestic skills in order to meet the needs of war. The 1939 annual Branch report expressed the hope and belief that "members will face an arduous year with the same unflagging energy they have displayed in the past".

In 1939 Branch members had already begun to meet in each other's homes in order to make comforts for the servicemen and a soldier comfort fund had been established. The comfort fund, which relied on small contributions from the Branch and the Maitland community, proved highly successful. In 1941 "Mrs. H. Rourke reported on the Penny Fund, a fund operating through the CWA in aid of the Comforts Fund. Proceeds from the fund totalled this year £132. Mrs. Rourke was congratulated by the meeting on the marvellous result" (Branch minutes, 1941). The next year Mrs. H. (Eva) Baker, the Branch president from 1939 through 1945, stated that "the penny a week fund convened by Mrs. H. Rourke had raised £164/14/1 during the year."

The CWA "head office" in Sydney often took the lead in suggesting various ways in which the State branches could cooperate to support the war effort. In August 1940 the Maitland Branch noted that "A letter was received from the CWA Sheep Skin Vest Committee asking for donations of pelts, as many are needed for the Navy & Air Force..." Later that year head office forwarded a letter from the secretary of the Polish War Victims Relief Fund to thank the CWA for their consideration.

Money raised by the Branch went towards many war appeals, including the Red Cross, mobile canteens, returned soldiers, and church army huts. In 1941 the Branch also gave £20 to the Service-women's Club, £10 to the prisoner of war appeal, and £10 to the Aerial Medical Services. In 1942 the Branch donated £25/10/- to the 4th Field Ambulance.

The Branch ladies found that their traditional handicraft skills could be used in support of the troops, both those serving abroad and in the Maitland area. "The Knitting Circle has continued to operate throughout the year under the guidance of Mrs. Dailey and Mrs. Carr, about fifty articles having been forwarded to head office to be dispatched to troops overseas" (Branch minutes, 1941). "Mrs. Baker went on to say that some of the members and other ladies had gone weekly to the local camps to sew for the soldiers. This work was very much appreciated, and had strengthened interest in the association" (Branch minutes, 1942).

A distinctly non-traditional application of handicrafts involved the making of camouflage nets. "Mrs. Castles, secretary of the Camouflage Nets Committee, stated that in all 131 nets had been made and dispatched to head office. She thanked all people who had contributed to the making of these nets. Mrs. Castles stated that one member, Miss Nichol, had been responsible for making about twenty nets alone. Fourteen nets were forwarded from Morpeth, 8 from East Maitland, and 1st net from Junior Tech. School" (Branch minutes, 1941). In 1942 the camouflage netting committee, now under the supervision of Miss Nichol, forwarded 1230 nets to Sydney.

Although the above activities continued throughout the war, it was another initiative for which the Maitland Branch was most commended. In 1940 the Maitland Rotary Club approached the ladies with a proposal which would ultimately involve the two groups. The Maitland CWA, which during the 1930s had been meeting in Kerr's Department Store in High Street, had purchased a block of land in Bulwer Street on which they intended to build their own hall. The Rotary Club proposed that this land be used for a service to the soldiers in the Maitland area, in particular the thousands of young men from all over Australia in the 2AIF who were undergoing military training in the Greta Army Camp. Up to 60,000 soldiers trained at Greta following the establishment of the Camp in late 1939.



This 31 October 1940 Newcastle newspaper article indicated the vast number of soldiers in the Maitland area. Although this parade exercise is identified as being in Lochinvar, the training camp was established further west at Greta.

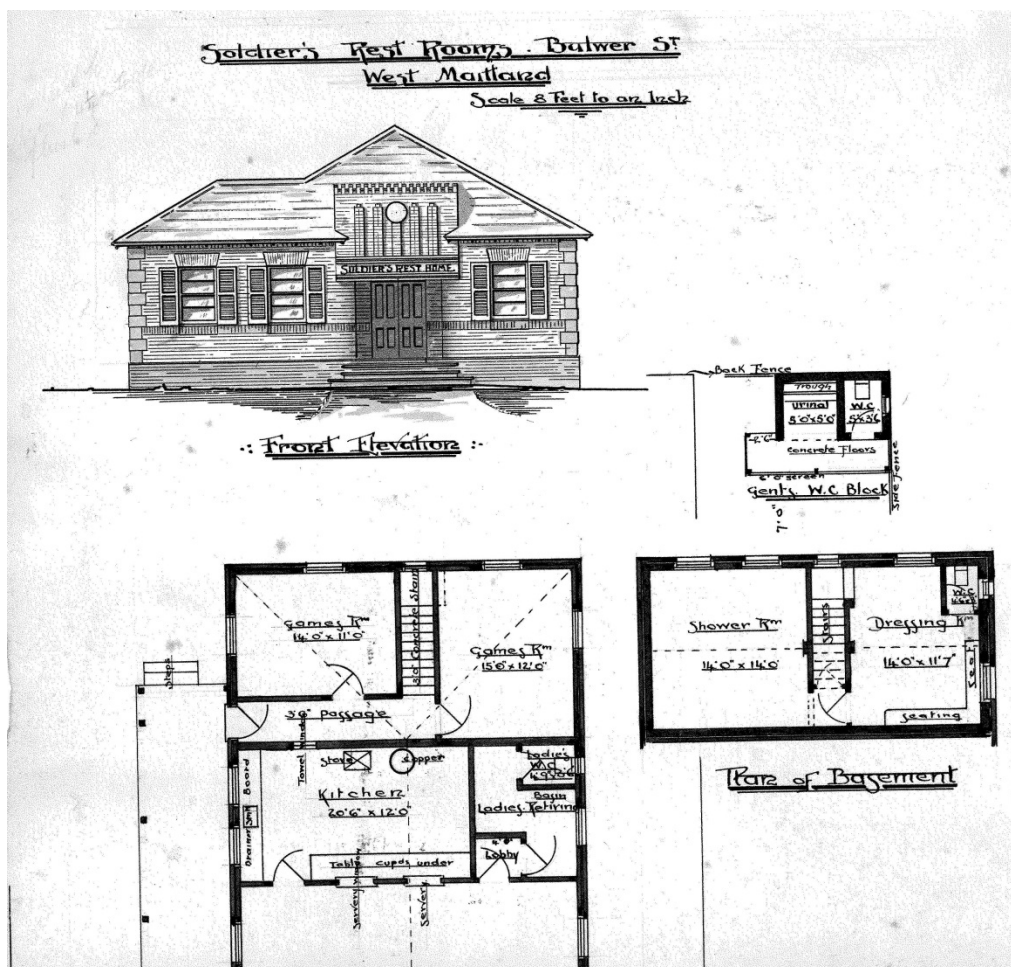
It was not by accident that the Maitland Rotary Club had approached the Maitland CWA. The late Mrs I. (Winsome) Pender had noted that it was usual during that period for husbands to belong to Rotary and for wives to be in the CWA.

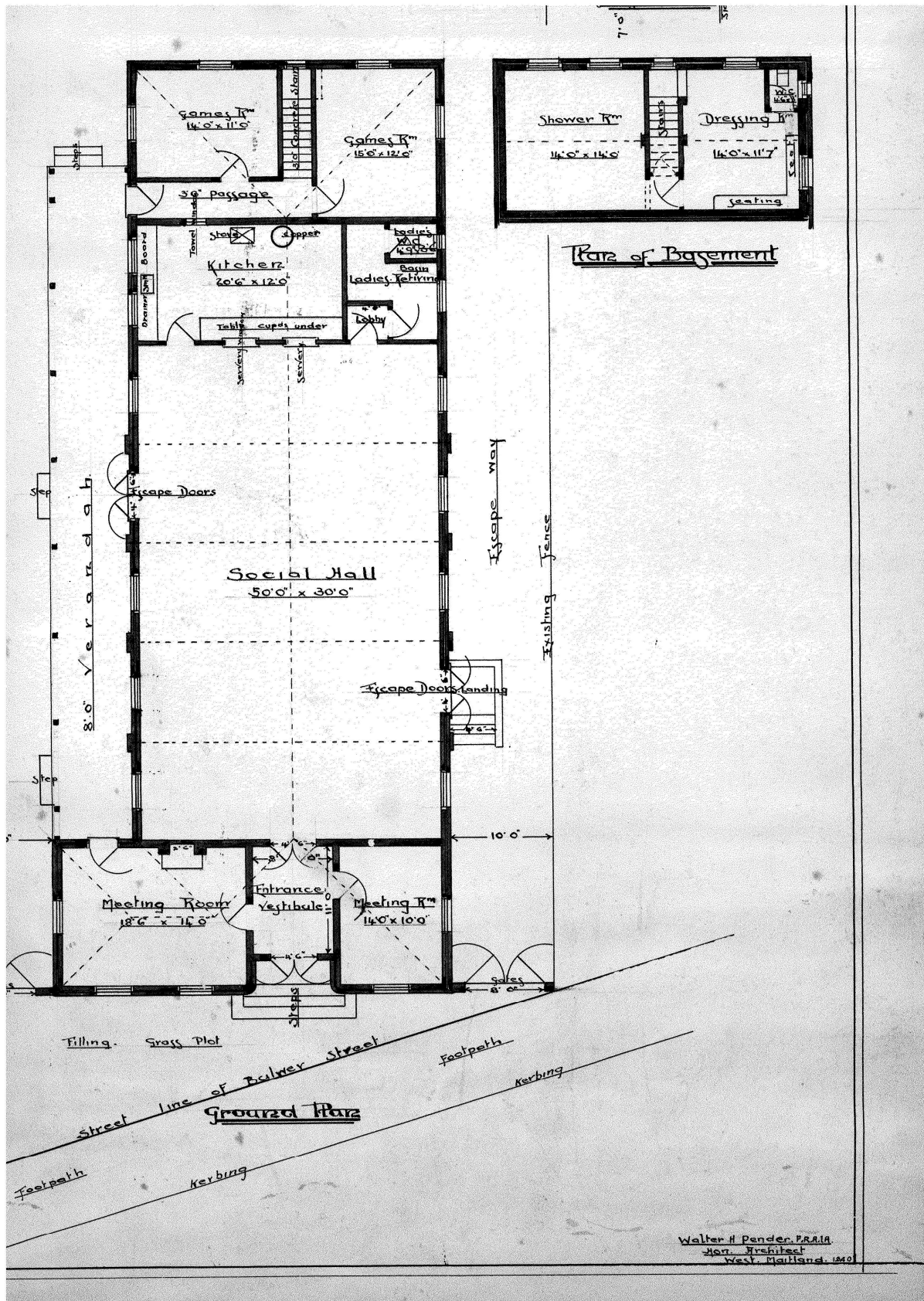
The June 1940 Branch minutes recorded that "The Rotary Club had since come forward with a very generous offer to the Branch, stating that if the Branch would provide their block of land & money in hand (£200) they, the Rotary Club, would supply the remainder of the means to erect a building which, apart from one room assigned to the CWA, would be used to entertain soldiers for the duration of the war & twelve months afterwards. After that time the building would become the sole property of the Maitland Branch of the Country Women's Association. After a short discussion in the meeting it was proposed...that the generous offer of the Rotary Club be accepted. The motion was carried unanimously by the meeting."

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The architect Walter Harold Pender submitted the plans for what was initially called “soldiers rest rooms” on 1 September 1940. Various well-known local businesses, including Pender Brothers, supplied the bricks and other materials as part of the voluntary effort to complete the building. The joint initiative was later to be known as the Service to Soldiers and the structure was named the Rotary-CWA Service to Soldiers Building. An executive committee was formed to oversee the Rotary-CWA project. Mr. T.M. Woodlands was its chairman and its treasurer was Ray Browne. The legal arrangement between the Maitland Branch and the Rotary Club would later be handled by Maitland solicitors W.J. Enright and A. Skelton. Mr. Skelton had acted as the Honorary Solicitor for the Maitland CWA over several years.

The following two (overlapping) images, which have been supplied by archivist Edward Bridle, are of Walter Harold Pender’s 1940 design, which is number M6309 in the Pender Archive at the University of Newcastle. The building had a 36 foot west-facing frontage and extended 100 feet to the east. A verandah flanked the north side of the building. Opposite the Bulwer Street entrance were two rooms. The left meeting room was reserved for the use of the CWA and the smaller one on the right was a writing room (and was Milton Morris’s office between 1956 and 1965). Between the two games rooms on the east one stairway led down to a shower/dressing area and another pull-down “ladder” stair gave access to the attic (storage) area. Behind the building there was a free-standing gent’s toilet block and a garden area.

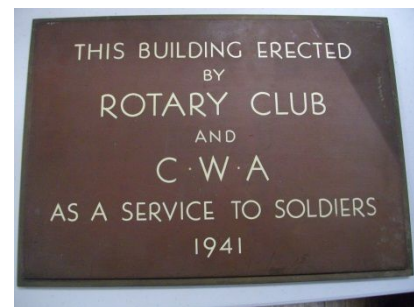






Undated (post war) photograph of the hall front

This image (right) is of the plaque which had been affixed to the front of the Bulwer Street building. It was discovered several years ago in a second-hand shop in Morpeth by Rotarian Malcolm Knight, who purchased it for \$60. The Rotary Club has kindly arranged for the plaque to be displayed in the present CWA hall in Church Street.



Lady Wakehurst did visit the Bulwer Street hall three days after the official opening. It was recorded that she planted the first in a row of trees. Presumably this was a jacaranda, as the 1950s Branch minutes note the presence of jacarandas at the rear of the building. Lady Wakehurst regularly travelled throughout New South Wales in aid of the war effort, and she frequently donned khaki when visiting the troops. The “Lady Wakehurst Drive” on the edge of the Royal National Park commemorates her work.

Mrs. J. C. (Desda) Capp, Branch president in the 1950s and again in the 1970s, had noted that the building had facilities for “hot and cold showers etc.” and “was available to all men and women of the forces until 11pm every night.” During the day a soldier could shower, with soap and towel supplied, for 2p, and in the evenings a service person could have dinner and dancing for 5p, except for Sundays, when community singing substituted for dancing.

The day to day running of the Service to Soldiers programme placed an ongoing financial strain on the CWA ladies. One popular source of revenue proved to be the bridge social. These fundraising socials were regularly held by the Branch throughout the war years.

COUNTRY WOMEN’S ASSOCIATION

The members of the above association invite the public of Maitland and District to the WAR BRIDGE AFTERNOON, to be held in the C.W.A.-Rotary Service to Soldiers Building, Bulwer Street, on Thursday-next, 28 March, at 2:30 pm, donation 2/- for C.W.A. activities. Sales table. Eva A. Baker, President, V. Bleazard, Hon. Sec. (23 March 1944, Maitland Mercury)

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Staffed by the Rotary Club and the Maitland CWA (and its associated Younger Set), the Bulwer Street hall was open every single day during the war. The Rotary Club recorded 229,200 visits by service people. In 1941 the Commissioner for the Red Cross Society toured the hall and said that he had never seen anything like it in New South Wales.

Although the Younger Set has not existed for decades, it played an essential role in the Service to Soldiers. The Younger Set was a state-wide CWA-related organisation for unmarried women between the ages of 18 and 30. According to its 1927 charter, it was established to teach young women the skills of first aid, home nursing, mothercraft, social service, and the arrangement of social functions. Each Younger Set group was associated with a CWA branch, which, as in Maitland, seconded women from the parent branch to act as mentors.

The original Maitland Younger Set had disbanded in 1937 but reformed in 1940 specifically to assist in the Service to Soldiers. Every day during the war these young women, with the assistance of the Branch and the Rotarians, hosted up to 400 men in uniform, and participated in the singing and dancing. Winsome Pender had said that the members of the Younger Set were not there late in the evenings, except for chaperoned functions. The Younger Set also organised their own social functions, such as the December 1944 dance at the Maitland Town Hall to raise money for a Services' Christmas tea. During the war years the Maitland Younger Set drew upon a membership of 283.

In 1942, the Maitland CWA president Eva Baker, in summarising the Branch contributions up to that time, stated "The work as a rule is left to a faithful few, but it is to our credit that practically every one of us has been prominently associated with some particular effort. Many members render valuable service to the men of the fighting forces and by a rostering method maintain a continuous afternoon and nightly service to entertain, feed, and brighten the lives of our soldiers."



*The entrance to the Maitland CWA Hall in
Bulwer Street (undated photograph)*

At the beginning of the war the ladies of the Maitland CWA had resolved to assist the country's war efforts in whatever way they could. By any reasonable measure they achieved that goal magnificently.

After the war, the Bulwer Street building was renovated by the Rotary Club and handed over debt free to the Maitland CWA in November 1946. The Bulwer Street building functioned as the CWA Branch hall for four more decades.

In addition to the individuals already acknowledged in the text, sincere thanks are due to Barbara Heckman, president of the Maitland Branch of the CWA, for her assistance.

Wolstenholme Memorial

Public Unveiling Ceremony

22 January 1913

The handsome memorial erected at the intersection of High and Church streets, to perpetuate the memory of the late Mr. James Wolstenholme, who in life proved himself a most valued and respected townsman, and was responsible for many acts of charity towards those who were in need of assistance, was publicly unveiled this afternoon by the Mayor (Alderman William McLaughlin) in the presence of many townspeople.

Amongst those present, in addition to the Mayor, were the Mayoress (Mrs. McLaughlin) Major Nicholson, M.L.A., Aldermen Fry, Russell, and Ribee, Messrs. J. W. Birkenhead (treasurer to the movement), W. J. Enright, R. Logan, O. K. Young, W. C. Quinton, Thos. Judge, Harold Browne, W. H. Abbott, (Dungog), Lieut. Colonel Markwell, W. J. Saunders (town clerk), James and Ray Wolstenholme, R. Young, and the employees of James Wolstenholme, Ltd. Apologies were received for the absence of Aldermen Mannall, Fletcher, and Jas. H. F. Waller, and Messrs. Chas. Earp, Alfred Beckett, and F. Head.

The Mayor said the ceremony that afternoon brought forth sad recollections. They would remember that on September 28, 1910 news was received in Maitland of the decease of one of their most prominent townsmen, the late Mr. James Wolstenholme. The news came as a shock to the community. Although not a public man, still he at all times took a deep interest in everything that was going on, and his worth was marked by his open-hearted generosity and his willingness at all times to assist in the various movements associated with the progress and advancement of the district. He also liberally assisted all charitable movements. His friends, therefore, thought it fitting and proper that some monument should be erected to his memory to recognize the work he had done.

Nearly 12 months afterwards his friends met, that meeting being presided over by a very sincere friend, since deceased, the late Mr. John Gillies, who took a very prominent part in the movement. It was a matter for regret that he was not there that day to see the monument unveiled.

It was no time for speech-making, but before he performed the ceremony of unveiling he desired to call on the member for Maitland (Major Nicholson) to say a few words.

Major Nicholson said he could not say it afforded him pleasure to be present, still he deemed it a privilege to be there to pay some slight respect to the memory of their departed friend. His friends were actuated by a desire to keep his memory green. They had known the late Mr. Wolstenholme's kindness of heart, his good nature and his generosity, and it was his sincere wish, which he was sure was endorsed by those present, that his memory would live as long in their hearts as that marble monument would last.

The Mayor, just before performing the unveiling, said it was with feelings of regret, regret that there was any necessity that it should be done but pleasure to think that the friends of the late Mr.

Wolstenholme had thought fit to erect such a handsome memorial as that in such a conspicuous place. It was both ornamental and useful to remind them of the uncertainty of life, and that they should all be prepared.

With these few remarks the Mayor pulled a cord which released a white shroud veiling the monument, adding "I now unveil the monument, ladies and gentlemen, and accept it on behalf of the ratepayers, and I thank the public for handing over the monument to the council. It will now be the council's business to take charge of it and see that it is kept in proper order, and that it is useful to the ratepayers and to those who visit our town."

The Mayor then turned on the water and drank to the health of those present. Mr. J. W. Birkenhead followed suit, which was the signal for many of the general public to join in.

THE MEMORIAL

The memorial, which consists of a drinking fountain, of Carrara white marble, supplants the big lamp which previously illuminated the corner. A solid concrete foundation has been laid, upon which the base of Ravensfield flagging rests. The design of the memorial is handsome and unique, consisting of a circular basin carved on graceful lines, from which rises a plain polished column. At the base of the column two swans have been cut in an artistic manner, the designing being very beautiful. The necks are gracefully curved, while the open wings, skilfully cut, meet around the column. On the top of the column a powerful gas lamp has been erected. The memorial was cut in Italy, and erected by Mr. Thomas Browne, through whom the fountain was procured. It bears the following inscription: "Memorial erected by friends of the late James Wolstenholme, 1912."

The Maitland Daily Mercury, Wednesday 22 January 1913, page 5

JAMES WOLSTENHOLME MEMORIAL

The West Maitland Council, decided at its meeting last evening, upon a recommendation from the works committee, that the James Wolstenholme memorial at the corner of High and Church streets be removed to a site in Church-street, near the railway station. A traffic "cop" is to be erected at the old site.

***The Maitland Daily Mercury,
Wednesday 6 October 1926,
page 4.***





In the 1960s Historical Society Vice President Pete Smith's father took this photo of Pete's cousins Angela, Robert and Darrel at the fountain's location in the middle of the road near the railway station - the victim of many automobile accidents over the years.

<https://www.flickr.com/photos/54834780@N06/6805380970>

The memorial was again moved in the early 1990s, this time to Maitland Park where it has remained.

In the News

Old movies are the reel deal with the Maitland Historical Society | VIDEO

By JESSICA BROWN Aug. 27, 2015, 6:09 p.m.

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BACK TO THE OLD DAYS: Historical Society president Keith Cockburn. Picture by STUART SCOTT

Maitland Mercury, Aug. 27, 2015.
By Jessica Brown.

The charm of black and white movies will come alive at a film night presented by the Maitland and District Historical Society.

At Saturday's [29 August] old-style movie experience at St John's Hall the audience will be treated to a full-length film from the 1930s called *One Hour With You*.

The American musical comedy is about a married couple who find themselves attracted to other people. It was produced

and directed by Ernst Lubitsch and features Maurice Chevalier and Jeanette MacDonald. The film will be played on an original 16 millimetre projector.

"It is black and white and the original film in its original canister," society president Keith Cockburn said. "It will give people an idea of what it was like in the old days with the rattle of the projector."

St John's Hall, on the corner of High and Cathedral streets, Maitland, was originally a theatre and will add to the charm of the evening.

"As an historical society it is appropriate we hold an event like this one," Keith said.

<http://www.maitlandmercury.com.au/story/3310734/old-movies-are-the-reel-deal-with-the-maitland-historical-society-video/>

Luxuriant cedar woodlands

Maitland has certainly changed over the decades but what was the area like way back in 1836, 179 years ago? James Backhouse noted in his journal on the 5th July 1836 that he had taken a walk in the luxuriant cedar woodlands of Maitland!

James Backhouse of York and his companion George Walker of Newcastle-on-Tyne were members of the Society of Friends, commonly called Quakers.

High Street, October 2015

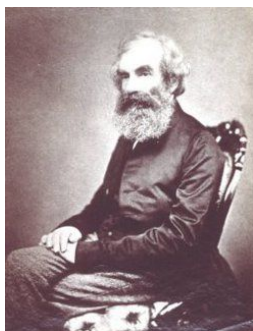


In September 1831 Backhouse and Walker sailed for Australia on a mission to the convicts and settlers. They arrived at Hobart in February 1832, and the next six years were spent in missionary journeys all over the then settled districts of Tasmania, New South Wales, and as far north as the site of Brisbane.

James Backhouse's ***A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies***, published in 1843, tells the story of his travels. Backhouse kept a copious diary and the following notes are extracts from Backhouse's narrative as he arrives in Maitland on 5th July 1836:

Maitland was in a state of great excitement yesterday, from the races, and to-day from a large sale of livestock, belonging to the Australian Agricultural Company. From rain, and the treading of the cattle on the rich soil of the road, through the eastern part of the town, it had become so cut up as to make a journey to the post-office, distant from our inn one mile and a half, a difficult task. I succeeded in effecting it and returning in two hours.

We took a walk into one of the luxuriant woods, on the side of the Hunter, such as are termed Cedar Brushes, on account of the Colonial White Cedar, Melia Azedarach, being one of the trees that compose them. These Cedar Brushes are also thick with climbers, such as Cissus Antarctica, the Kangaroo Vine, Eopomatia, a briary bush allied to the Custard-apple, but with an inferior fruit, and several Apocinaea.



Backhouse and Walker held a meeting in a school-house at Green Hills, or Morpeth, and afterward dined with "a benevolent individual." "He belongs to a class that is pretty numerous in these Colonies, who, having been brought up to a military life, have beaten their swords into plough shears and have proved that the pecuniary profits of the arts of peace, as well as their comforts, are much greater than the arts of war."

Backhouse returned to York in 1841 and dying there in 1869.

Australian Dictionary of Biography <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/backhouse-james-1728>

A Narrative of a Visit to the Australian Colonies available in full text free online
<http://trove.nla.gov.au/version/25669560>

Journals for sale

The Society has the following unique (now out of print) publications available for sale:

Journal of Hunter Valley History. Vol.1 No.1 1985, 141 Pages

Journal of Hunter Valley History. Vol.1 No. 2 1985, 112 Pages

Journal of Hunter Valley History. Vol. 2 No. 1 1986, 176 Pages

Journal of Hunter Valley History. Vol. 2 No. 2 1986, 154 Pages

**Christmas gift
idea!**

The four abovementioned Journals are available for \$20.00 each plus Postage through Australia Post.

Also Available:

Hunter Valley Directory 1841

By Elizabeth Guilford. Pub. 1987. 248 Pages, Hard Cover. \$25.00 Plus Postage

To order or enquire, please email maitlandhistorical@gmail.com
or phone 0438623299

Obituary – Chic Cooper

Chic Cooper was an Honorary member of the Historical Society and a great benefactor to us. She had a great interest in local history in the Newcastle and Lake Macquarie area where she lived before moving to East Maitland where she continued to expand upon this interest. This is evidenced by the contents of the bookshelf on the side wall of the Society's rooms. She had a special interest in a racehorse named 'Luskin Star' and she had the magnificent cabinet in the corner specially built to house related material, and the cabinet and contents were donated to the Historical Society. Chic also paid a large amount to have our oil painting of the Lewis Morris cordial factory restored and she provided funding for other purposes.

Her interest and philanthropy was not confined to this Society, she supported other causes and donated considerable funds toward a number of very popular murals that abound in nearby Kurri Kurri.

Many of you may not be aware that Chic Cooper was a Maori Princess. Along with her husband, 'Bobby' (also deceased) they composed and recorded a number of songs relating to the Hunter area.

Chic's funeral was intended to be a private affair, however at the last moment this was changed and took place at Lake Macquarie Memorial Park, Ryhope, on Saturday 29th August 2015. This was attended by the Society's Vice President, Ruth Trappel.

Whilst we remain very grateful for the assistance which Chic has afforded this Society, I am in no doubt she will be sadly missed by many.

For an on behalf of the members of the Maitland & District Historical Society

Keith Cockburn

President

Obituary – Lance Murray

Lance Murray was a man with a great passion for history. His interest was, for the greater part, focused on Aboriginal culture and his wonderful collection of artefacts. Lance maintained a considerable interest and involvement in community organisations and the preservation of historic items.

Lance's funeral took place at the Rotunda at Stockade Hill on Wednesday 2nd September 2015. This was a most appropriate venue for his funeral as he was instrumental in establishing it as we know it now and was a great lover of the outdoors.

Once more I can say that he will be sadly missed by many.

For an on behalf of the members of the Maitland & District Historical Society

Keith Cockburn

President

Diary Dates 2015

Meetings are held at the Historical Society's rooms, 3 Cathedral Street

Rooms are also open each Wednesday and Saturday, 10am to 3pm.

November

Tuesday 17th Business meeting 5.30

Sunday 29th November – early 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 4.00pm and any additional information will be advised by email.



Victoria Bridge

**Spanning Wallis Creek,
Maitland**

Linking East and West Maitland

December

Tuesday 1st Guest speaker 5.30

Tuesday 15th Business meeting 5.30