



Macleay River Historical Society

NEWSLETTER

November, 2014

Number 9

President Report

If you can spare a day or a few hours per week, or know someone who can, why not think about volunteering at Kempsey Museum? You will have the opportunity of working with and learning from our experienced and qualified volunteers in various areas such as collection cataloguing, digital photography, writing and researching local history, and conservation techniques. Computer skills in areas such as databases and spreadsheets can be gained and full training is offered. Kempsey Museum recently completed the Standards Programme administered by Museums and Galleries NSW. To enquire about volunteering, please download and complete the form at www.kempseymuseum.org.

We have replaced two computers in the Research Room caused by equipment failure and removal of support for the Windows XP operating system. Work has now commenced on cataloguing our research materials, such as files, maps etc and our research library of 1,800 books has already been catalogued.

With our storage shed, we have started addressing the five Council conditions required for the issue of a construction certificate. We have a building certifier and also a Principle Certifying Authority. We are now required to provide stairs from the outset for the mezzanine floor, which will raise the cost. Hopefully we will soon be in a position to commence site works.

The next Museum Fun day will be held in conjunction with the Spinners and Weavers display and will be on Saturday 8 November from 10 am

to 2 pm. A lot of work has gone into designing activities for the children, and we hope this will be bigger and better than ever.

Our publishing programme to commemorate the World War 1 Centenary actually commenced with our February 2014 journal, although approval to use the Centenary logo did not arrive in time for printing. The November Journal will focus on Kempsey during the first year of the war in 1914. There will be one Journal each year to mark each year of the War, ending with the year 1918 in 2018. This will be supplemented by a changing display in a central area within the Museum.

Phil Lee
President

Research Report

Noela Wilks requested research on the Wittig-Lynch (nee Fagan) families and Phil is working on this at present.

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Lydia Niche, a RMS contractor required information about 'Ravenswood', south of Kempsey. Lydia supplied some maps which assisted Phil Lee with the research.

A research request from Kathleen was received seeking information about the drowning of the Barnes children in the Macleay River during the 1930's, and Phil handled this.

A breakthrough in the Mary Ann Finn research, prior to 1839, is ready for dispatch to the requester. Dianne has been working on this request.

A street naming request has been received from KSC for the new roads in the shire and to rename some existing sections of roads affected by the Pacific Highway upgrade, so as to minimize confusion now the works are complete. Phil and Dianne are working on the possibilities for each of the many roads identified.

Peter Ryan completed family history research on the Hilliar family of Polar Creek and Eungai, which has been sent to Warren of Red Hill, ACT. Peter has also done research on George Gildea, locating the gravesite at West Kempsey, date of death was 1888.

Tom Plunket is retyping the Map Index on to a spreadsheet to assist with more easily identifying maps required for research requests.

Information was received via email from Derek Burr who provided two updated family charts one baptism record and a 26 page book of the Lawrence family.

Carol made a donation of family data sheets of the Lancaster family.

Dianne Nolan
Research Manager

Photography Report

Phil gave photographs of and newspaper advertisements for the Hargan Saw to Robyn, who

is putting together an Object Story for ABC Open on her father's Hargan Saw. This has now been published (see <https://open.abc.net.au/explore/78865>). Invented at Willawarrin, the Hargan saw revolutionised the process of sleeper cutting until the chain saw came along.

On Monday 15 September we had a visit from a Visual arts class from Kempsey High School and I gave a talk on Angus McNeil and some cameras from our collection. The students then toured the Museum and commented very favourably on it. The teachers described our Museum as a fantastic resource but underutilised.

We received some photos via email from the Naval Historical Society of Australia re the German prisoners from the *Emden*, some of whom were interned at Trial Bay. We identified one of the photos as having been taken at Holdsworthy and not Trial Bay. The Society wanted to know the names of the *Emden* internees at Trial Bay, so far we have not been able to provide these.

Mark Avery ordered photographs of the Mayfair Theatre. He said they brought back great memories of David Knauer's 10th birthday and watching Storm Boy.

Keith Delaforce, now living in Brisbane, made his annual visit to the Museum this month, this time bringing more family photographs for us to copy. He seems to have an endless supply.

Caroline Carey is reprinting *Tales of Trial Bay*, which will be the third edition. The printer has found a problem in reproducing the photographs and Caroline has to produce freshly scanned ones to replace them. We hold most of the photographs however there are some we don't. We are in the process of selecting replacements for Caroline's consideration. This will be a final edition which is a shame as the information in it is well researched and written,

Ross Lane called in on Friday 24 October to discuss with Margaret Ennis a journal on the Lane/Watt family. They were extraordinary

citizens for a long time and played a big part in the history of Kempsey. It will be interesting to see their story in print.

Zelma has donated another set of photographs of her family to go with the other collections. She very kindly had some of her father's very large "For Sale" posters copied and donated the copies to us. The posters had the lots printed on the poster and Zelma's father Magnus had even written the purchasers name on each with the purchase price.

We are still looking for information on Hat Head. If you can assist please advise Phil Lee on how you can contribute to the booklet on the village of Hat Head and its surrounds. Hat Head has always been a popular holiday area: there might be a snap of one of the huts the fishermen and their families used, anything at all. Even if you don't think the photographs are what we want, please send them to us at mrhs5@bigpond.com for us to consider whether we can use them. An approximate date the photographs were taken would be a bonus.

The new purchaser of the Hardiman/Steffensen house in Lord Street, East Kempsey called to purchase an early photograph of the house. We contacted Ross Waters who married into the Hardiman family and who has written a family history of Leo J Hardiman, solicitor of Kempsey, to see if he had any photographs. He emailed a copy of his work (which does contain an early photograph of the house) and we have handed this on to research.

Judith Waters
Photography Manager

Museum Report

The Macleay Argus 2014 microfilm rolls were ordered from W F Pascoe and are now on our shelves. The annual microfilms are generously provided with assistance from the Macleay Argus.

New displays have now been completed - a gramophone donated by the Thurgood family, and the *Fairy Queen* ship model. Our curator, Russell



Fairy Queen Ship Model (MRHS Collection, donated by Carol Carlisle)

McKenzie has also been busy with props for the upcoming Museum Fun Day on 8 November.

Our onsite Review for the 2014 Standards Programme was completed on Wednesday 15 October. Ruth, Dianne and myself attended. We discussed our World War 1 Centenary plans and it was decided to have a changing display in the centre area to match our Journal Publishing programme.

Donations included pulley blocks used in the building industry before hydraulics, bundles of correspondence relating to the Hat Head Reserve Trust from Zelma Wood and Shorty Ranger's piano. A new storage unit has been leased for this.

I donated some postal history items from my collection, including a telegram from 1914 (see separate article). Dr Ros Russell who carried out our Significance Assessment in 2012, suggested that I donate the items on the 100th Anniversary of the outbreak of World War 1.

Due to popular demand, Garry Munday's book *From Go to Whoa*, a history of horseracing on the Macleay, will be reprinted. Garry's new book on cricket on the Macleay in the 19th Century will also come out soon, and we will once again have a Calendar printed, the theme for 2016 being schools and education.

Phil Lee

Exploring our Collection - The Austro-Hungarian Telegram of 1914



The Austro-Hungarian Telegram (MRHS Collection)

This Telegram from Dr Ferdinand I Freyesleben, Consul-General to Australia for the Austro-Hungarian Empire, was sent on 30 July 1914 to the Austro-Hungarian Vice-Consul in Newcastle, Archibald Aloysius Rankin announcing the event which would lead to the outbreak of the Great War – “Archduke Heir Presumptive Francis Fredinand and Consort were assassinated at Sarajevo on saturday [sic]”. Dr Freyesleben graduated as a Doctor of laws at Prague University and later entered the Consular service when twenty-seven years old. Before becoming Consul-General to

Australia, New Zealand and some Pacific Islands, he had served his country in the chief English-speaking countries of the world.

On the outbreak of war, Archibald Rankin resigned his position as Vice-Consul and became prominent in the administration of the Newcastle Hospital. Dr Freyesleben was deported to San Francisco, USA and forced to leave behind his collection of Indian and Chinese antiquities which were sold by the Commonwealth of Australia at an auction. The staff of the German and Austro-Hungarian

Embassies, consuls and entourage departed from Sydney on the *Ventura* with “much weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth”.

The telegram was retrieved from papers, letters and files being dumped from “Malmo”, 44 King Street, Newcastle where the donor leased a flat around 1970. The Austro-Hungarian Vice-Consul, Mr Rankin, apparently had offices in the building in 1914. Mr Rankin became Chairman of Directors and later President at Newcastle Hospital, an association which was to last for over thirty years. During both World Wars, Mr Rankin was an outstanding supporter of patriotic movements.

He was the solicitor for BHP Co Ltd and a

founding member of Newcastle Aero Club. He passed away in 1951 and the Newcastle suburb of Rankin Park is named after him.

The building “Malmo” was built around 1890 by George Sanderson who had arrived in Australia from Sweden in 1870. He founded the stevedoring company Sanderson Stevedoring in 1895. The building was demolished after being damaged in the 1989 Newcastle earthquake.

Phil Lee

References:

Newcastle Morning Herald
Trove

The 1936 Great Air Pageant at Frogmore

(One of our long term members, Les Sullivan, recalled the Air Pageant held by the Royal Aero Club at Frogmore (lower Macleay River) on the Kings Birthday 29 June 1936. Ironically, Charles Kingsford-Smith had become bogged at Frogmore Paddock three years earlier with Charles Purvis as his mechanic. The pageant was billed as the “greatest air pageant ever held in a country area in Australia.” The Macleay Argus reported that “from early morning yesterday cars, lorries, sulkies, cycles, etc all carried their quotas of eager sight-seers to the Frogmore air pageant ground, and later bus after bus entered the ground loaded to capacity, until there was hardly a foot of available space within coo-ee of the actual drome ground, and a conservative estimate placed the attendance at close upon 5000”. - Ed)

I came across this account of an incident involving Smithy” (Sir Charles Kingsford Smith) in the book, *Outback Airman* by Harry Purvis and Joan Priest which thought might supplement any other accounts you might have — Macleay Argus of the time?

As a plane-mad kid in the 1930s the forced landing



VH-UXX “Faith in Australia” Avro X of Charles Ulm in 1933
(Northern Territory Library)

at Frogmore was talked about for years afterwards and became something of a local legend with various claims as to whose bullock team failed to extricate the “Old Bus” (Southern Cross) from the swamp. He mentions the date, 1933.

Exactly three years later at an “Aerial Pageant” at the same site, Frogmore, in June 1936 my grandmother shouted my cousin and me a ten shilling joy flight in an identical plane, Charles Ulm’s “Faith in Australia” in which he made a number of record-breaking flights. I was eleven years old and in first year at West Kempsey High



Advertisement for 1936 Air Pageant (Macleay Argus)

School. The pilot was the same Harry Purvis and the Pageant was organised by the newly-formed Kempsey Aero Club. There is an account of the day on King's Birthday holiday in the Macleay Argus, 30 June 1936. Frogmore would now be almost under the Kempsey Bypass.

Purvis also describes another forced landing when returning from giving joy flights at Coffs Harbour in Faith in Australia at around the same time as my first flight. He put the plane down on a beach which he says was near South-West Rocks' but soft sand caused it to veer into the surf. After getting help from locals which he says meant swimming across the mouth of a river (Macleay ?) one hundred yards wide the plane was pulled out

of the surf, With needles and thread borrowed from local fishermen the torn fabric covering the plane was repaired. I have enclosed photo copies of the relevant pages. I seem to remember that the forced landing was on the beach between SWR and the New Entrance but swimming the river suggests it was on the Stuarts Point side. It certainly caused a local stir, I remember that for many years after the incident a souvenir piece of fabric was on display in Merten's store in Livingstone Avenue.

Contributed by Les Sullivan

References

Purvis, Harry 1979 *Outback Airman*
Macleay Argus files

Macleay Newspaper Resources

The German philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer wrote that "Newspapers are the second hand of time." Although he went on to say that the hand is made of inferior metal and seldom works properly, it is widely accepted that newspapers are a valuable tool for the history researcher and family historian.

We are often asked about local newspapers and what is available. Whilst the subject of newspapers on the Macleay could be the subject of a much more detailed study, this short history will give

members and visitors an idea of our holdings and what they contain.

The first newspaper on the Macleay was *The Macleay Herald*, first published in May 1864. The founder was Charles Boyce who, together with younger brother Thomas, had emigrated to Victoria with their parents in 1849 from London, England. The Macleay Herald was published twice weekly. In 1867, Charles handed over proprietorship to his brother Thomas and moved to Taree, where he founded the *Manning River*

Times. He later opened a furniture emporium and was active in town affairs, becoming Mayor of Taree in 1894 and 1907.

The Macleay Herald was followed in February 1870 by the *The Macleay Independent and Advocate for the Northern Coast Districts*. The founder was Francis Aria, the son of a wealthy English merchant. The *Independent* did not remain so for very long however and within ten years it was incorporated into the *Macleay Herald*.

The Macleay Chronicle and Bellinger Advertiser was the third newspaper on the Macleay and first appeared in 1878. The founders were George Gabell and G R Scott. Its original format was a double demi sheet (90 cms by 57.5 cms folded, also called broadsheet) and it was published once per week.

The only surviving newspaper from the nineteenth century today is the *Macleay Argus* (originally *The Macleay Argus and Bellinger, and Nambucca Advocate*) which had its first issue on 17 October 1885. The manager was George Hilder, with Campbell Kerr as editor and William Weeks as compositor.

The price of most of the above newspapers in the 19th Century was sixpence. In today's terms this would be equivalent to around \$4.50.

The *Macleay Herald* was languishing by the time its competitors, the *Chronicle* and *Argus* had appeared. By 1890, it had ceased publication. The *Macleay Chronicle*, which had been in the hands of the Noonan family since 1910, was hard hit in the floods of 1949 and 1950. On 30 July 1952 it published its last edition, the publishing right, goodwill, plant and machinery being purchased by the *Macleay Argus*. Stout opponents throughout the first half of the twentieth century, the *Chronicle* and *Argus* had joined forces to produce a joint edition after the 1949 floods putting service to the public above all else. The demise of the *Chronicle* was commemorated in verse by Sam Chapman of Nulla Nulla Creek:

And now we say on a certain day,

This thirtieth of July
Here's a long farewell to our printing spell.
For we have to say goodbye;

But we hope and trust, in rain or dust,
As long as the years rolled through,
That we served you well in the news we tell
When we've written our last review.

There has been a succession of free newspapers printed on the Macleay. These were delivered to all householders with the cost of production being paid for by advertisers. The more recent of these were either printed under the auspices of the *Macleay Argus* or printed privately. One of these published between 1960 and 1965 was the *Macleay District Advertiser*. Another was the *Valley Jet* first published in September 1972, which contained many well-researched historical articles written by Patricia Riggs and Gloria Hole.

Our holdings of the above publications, and other sources for these are as follows:

Macleay Herald: There is one surviving edition of the *Macleay Herald*, 3 January 1880 in the Mitchell Library and microfilm copies are available in the National Library of Australia, Canberra. Items from the *Herald* were often reprinted in the *Maitland Mercury* and these are available via Trove.

The Macleay Independent: One copy of the edition of 17 November 1871 is held by the Society.

Benefits of Membership

Membership Applications and Renewals start from February in the New Year. Members of the Macleay River Historical Society now enjoy the following benefits:

Quarterly Journal (posted or pick up from Museum)
Quarterly Newsletter (posted, emailed or pick up from Museum)

Discount of 20% on basic Research Fee (\$20.00 instead of \$25.00 per subject)

Discount of 10% on Photograph orders (excluding postage)

Macleay Chronicle: Microfilm copies of editions from 1899 to 1952 are held by the Society. Bound newsprint copies from 1899 to 1952 are also held, with some earlier print editions.

Macleay Argus: Microfilm copies of editions from 1885 to 2012 are held. We also have bound copies from 1885 to 2005. The *North Coast Magazine* and *Coast Watch* are included in some of these.

Macleay District Advertiser: Editions from 1960 to 1965 are held both on microfilm and bound volumes.

Valley Jet: Bound volumes only, from 27 September 1972 to September 1975.

The Macleay Weekly and Trading Post: Some print copies held from 30 September 1987.

The Mid Coast Observer; Bound newsprint copies are held.

Other newspapers:

The Maitland Mercury 1843-1890 10 Reels of Microfilm (incomplete)

Cloncurry News and Mt Isa Advocate 1930-1933 Microfilm

Cloncurry Advocate 1931-1953 Microfilm

Richmond River Herald 1856-1913 8 Reels of Microfilm (incomplete)

Editor: Phil Lee

Design: Gary Marshall

Our Affiliations

Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations
Australasian Telephone Collector's Society Inc
Australian National Maritime Museum
Historic Houses Trust
Macleay Valley Coast Tourism
Museums Australia
Museums and Galleries NSW
Royal Australian Historical Society



Macleay River Historical Society

Office Bearers:

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Garry Munday

Tom Plunkett

Secretary & Public Officer

Ruth Woodward

Treasurer

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Patrons

Billie Crawford

Terry Eakin

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Postal Address

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Membership

\$18.00 single

\$23.00 plus journal and postage

Committee Meetings

Meetings are held at 3pm

every third Tuesday of the month

Research

Tuesday: Desley Nunn

Wednesday: Dianne Nolan

Thursday: Garry Munday

Photographic

Friday: Judy Waters, Debbie Reynolds, Phil Lee

MUSEUM OPEN

10.00 am to 4.00 pm daily except

Good Friday and Christmas day