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# Macleay River Historical Society

## NEWSLETTER

February, 2013

Number 2

### President's Report

Welcome to our first newsletter of 2013. By the time our next newsletter goes out the Kempsey Bypass will be reality and we wait to see the impact on visitor numbers to our Museum. We will lose a lot of the passing trade but the queueing traffic outside our Park which may have deterred many prospective local visitors will be a thing of the past.

We mourned the passing late last year of one of our stalwarts and life members, Mr Noel Woodward. Noel had a very good knowledge of people, places and objects in local history which he enjoyed sharing with others. A skilled artisan, Noel played a key role in the construction of displays and conservation of exhibits.

There were no problems in the Museum that couldn't be solved by Noel's ingenuity, from locking a filing cabinet to which the keys had been lost, to safely mounting an old school bell so visitors could relive the experience (pleasant or otherwise) of hearing it rung. He will be sadly missed.

Phil Lee  
President

### Annual General Meeting 2013

Our Annual General Meeting will take place on Tuesday 19 March 2013 at 3.00 pm in the Museum, South Kempsey.

### 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)

### Research Report

Following the Walter Doyle enquiry late last year, Val Miles approached the Argus to publish the information she had provided the enquirer with, in the hope that other readers might have more information on "Charcoal" Doyle. Walter Doyle (nicknamed 'Charcoal') was a homeless man who lived at the rubbish tip when it was at Rudders Lagoon. He passed away in 1965 at Rudders Lagoon.

Dr Roslyn Russell wanted information from the Dornan diaries on the death of Len Dornan and relevant pages on 1916-1920 including the Ferry Lane Memorial Trees. Ros is particularly interested in the experience of war from the point of view of those who remained at home.

Jenny Colling, Kempsey Shire Council, wanted information on the dedication of the reserve at Dondingalong wharf.

We received an email from Wales in December from a Gough descendant who is researching his ancestors from Kempsey, in particular Aubrey Gough. (Buggy and General Blacksmith Works in Rudder Street). This research is ongoing.

We had a visit from a descendant of Jack Lawrence, a World War 1 soldier. The descendant had some information on Jack Lawrence but wanted to go back further. We were able to provide information back to Jack's grandfather John Lawrence marrying Rosanna Cartwright at St Thomas' Church in Port Macquarie in 1850. John Lawrence was the stock-keeper at Lake Innes and later at Moparrabah for Major Kemp.

We were asked for printouts of all the reference items 1-26 on the back of Journal 188 "A Noble Sacrifice – Francis Clarke". Garry Munday has been dealing with this.

A novel request was made by a visitor for a copy of page one of the Macleay Argus 2nd February 1953 for his Dad's 60th birthday.

I provided more obituaries for relatives of the SAMYIA family buried in Kempsey.

Information was requested on Hollywood Hospital and Sister Jemesen. The enquirer was born there when it was at 20 Short Street. Our new researcher Ken Brown dealt with this. Phil Lee photographed the house for us to provide a copy.

Peter Ryan is working on research on William Johnson and Catherine (nee Byrnes) of Christmas Creek/Austral Eden.

We had a request for information on Jane (Margaret) Hudson who married Robert Pettit. The researcher only wanted to know if there were any descendants of Hudson still in Kempsey as she wanted to know if there was an aboriginal connection to this line of Hudsons. We gave her contact details for M Ellen Brown, author of *Strength in Adversity* on the Hudson and Fitzpatrick family history as she has the family tree in her books.

Garry Munday provided Todd Connaughton of the Argus information on Vilma Hunt (nee Dalton-Webb), who passed away recently. Vilma Dalton-Webb became internationally renowned for her work in several scientific fields including radiation, nuclear science and medicine. As Vilma Webb she moved with her family to Kempsey when she was seven years old. Her father Bill owned the Mayfair Theatre. Todd has since compiled the obituary published in the Macleay Argus Friday, 18 January edition.

The new proprietors of the West Kempsey Hotel are creating a website for the Hotel and were after historical information on the Hotel and past licencees. The West Kempsey Hotel was built around 1865-66 by Henry Weingarth.

A recent visitor to the Museum wanted information on the Kerr/Mainey families.

On January 14th an email arrived regarding Thomas Thompson and Jane James who were ex convicts living

in Kempsey village in 1838. Thomas was a sawyer. I couldn't find any information on either of them in the Thompson and James files and the date precluded searching in the Macleay Argus newspapers. Suggested they contact Port Macquarie Historical Society who may be able to help them regarding convict listings.

We had a visit from the Hon Catherine Cusack, a NSW MLC who was researching the wreck of the brig Trial which was wrecked on the North Coast in 1817 after being seized by convicts in Sydney Harbour. Catherine was particularly interested in the fate of the survivors of the wreck.

Peggy Gould  
Research Section

## Photography Report

We have been lucky to have University Graduate Samantha Killmore as a volunteer during a break prior to resuming studies for her PhD. Sam has been working on our digitisation project of all of our printed photographs. We wish Sam all the best in her further studies.

We were asked by the Kempsey Bypass Alliance if we had any photographs of the tree planting ceremony in Ferry Lane and Frederickton just after World War 1. We could only find an aerial photograph of the trees taken in the early 1950's.

Mr Les Sullivan donated several historic photographs of Trial Bay and Jerseyville. We were also given two really interesting collections recently.

1) Ross Turnbull was born here and left in his High School years. His mother was a Popple, his dad worked on the railway. Ross has given us some family photographs, West Kempsey school photos, various Kempsey floods and some really nice shots of the 1972 Ferries stranded on South West Rocks beach.

2) Mrs Margaret Sheppard of Nanango, Queensland has donated a collection of mainly original photographs of her late husband's family. Barry Sheppard had come into possession of them whilst compiling his family's history and they cover the Sheppard, Batterson and King families. Mrs Sheppard has copied them and her family wished the originals to be donated to our museum.

Meanwhile, Debbie and I are continuing to work on the Angus McNeil Collection. Deb scanned a lovely little girl from the late 1940s/early 1950s and I guessed she just might be a McNeil. I emailed Angus McNeil, son of former Mayor of Kempsey, Dr Angus McNeil and it bounced right back. Yes it is Catherine, daughter of Dr Angus and Mrs Marcia McNeil. Just a bit of trivia: Catherine was one of the toddlers used by Pixie O'Harris as a "model" for her murals painted in the Children's Ward at Kempsey (Macleay) District Hospital. The other "model" was Jennifer Quinn, daughter of Dr Bill and Dr. Eva Quinn of Kempsey. Dr McNeil and Dr Quinn were partners in a medical practice in Smith Street after the end of the Second World War. The murals were painted out many years ago.

Mr Bob Clarke of Coffs Harbour, who has been researching the Kempsey CYM Football Club, donated several large photographs of Macleay football teams. All players are named and this will supplement our already large collection of historic sporting photographs.

We provided several photographs from Macleay Argus negatives for Bruce Cain who is finishing off his book on the history of the Catholic Church in Port Macquarie. Our Society holds negatives of photographs taken for the Macleay Argus dating from about the 1960's to around 2005 when the newspaper switched to digital photography. Additionally, we have bound volumes of the Macleay Argus from 1970 to 1988 from which it is possible to copy photographs.

Judy Waters  
Photography Section

## Museum Report

Our new volunteer Russell McKenzie has been working on a display cabinet loaned to us from Trial Bay Museum and we hope to have it in use for a new display in the near future. Originally from the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences, Sydney (now the Powerhouse Museum), the cabinet is something of an artefact itself and would be close to 100 years old.

We received a Community Heritage Grant for a Significance Assessment of our collection in 2011 and the final Report was received in November last year. The Report, by Dr Roslyn Russell of Significance International, found our collection of national

significance with some items not seen in other Museums. Whilst collections of a single photographic studio do exist in other collecting institutions, Dr Russell described our Angus McNeil photographic collection as "one of Australia's most significant collections of a local studio photographer who documented the life of the Macleay River region for half a century of momentous change."

John Russell continues to research into our Timber collection, the aim being to provide significance statements and better interpretative signage for our Display.

Dr Robert Smith of Southern Cross University has been looking for historical footage of Kempsey, the Macleay and other North Coast regions in the National Film and Sound Archive. The idea is to provide a link from our website to YouTube where the films can be viewed. He has found footage of a procession in Kempsey during the 1930's (since identified as the 1936 Kempsey Centenary Procession) and is currently seeking copyright approval so it can be displayed. Some examples of Robert's work for Richmond River Historical Society may be seen by visiting their website [www.richhistory.org.au/](http://www.richhistory.org.au/) and clicking the "Moving Pictures" link.



*Messrs H. McKenzie and Bert Chamberlain (Daisy) on a bicycle built for two in Kempsey Centenary Parade, November 1936. (Photo MRHS)*

## Remembering Harry Reece

The mention of Mr H Reece and Dr Rankine in our last Journal and Newsletter respectively evoked pleasant memories for member Mrs Enid Dawson from Port Macquarie of wonderful neighbours and outstanding

citizens. She wrote: "I feel some people only touch our lives for a short time but they remain in our memory." Here we reproduce Mrs Dawson's recollections of Harry Reece, we will hold over her memories of Dr Rankine for a future issue.

"Your article about the building of the War Memorial Hall in Kempsey — Mention of the foundation stones being laid on the 8th December, 1933 for that building by Sir Philip Game, Governor of NSW and by Mr. H. Reece, the President of the RSSI League.

I was born in June, 1931 and while I didn't remember this event, I am sure that this Mr. H Reece mentioned here was Mr Harold Reece I do remember later in the 1930's, the Reece family, most pleasant people lived in a house in River Street. This house situated next to the home of Misses Ella and Patti Carey, both music teachers and their mother. The Carey home was on the corner of top side of Wide Street and

facing River Street. The Reece family lived in the next house facing River Street a little further up the hill.

Our Secomb family lived in Wide Street with only my grandfather William Secomb's home 'Truro' between us and the Misses Carey's home.

Mr. Reece was the Superintendent of the Methodist Sunday school, then situated with the Church in Belgrave Street. Mr. Reece used to drive his two sons Ian and Robert also my sister Doreen and myself to Sunday School on a Sunday afternoon. I always thought that Mr. Reece worked in the CPS (Court of Petty Sessions) Office down near the Police Station and West Kempsey Public school.

Since receiving your journal I looked on the Internet to see IF my thoughts of Mr. Reece's occupation was



correct. (I know the next family to live in that house after the Reece family was the Knight family).

I thought Mr. Knight also worked in the CPS. I am not sure if Mr. Knight's name was Oliver or they had a son by that name. I seem to remember there were two boys and possibly a girl in the Knight family).

On the Internet I didn't find out an answer about Mr. Harold Reece. But I did find information on his son Ian Reece who has been a lecturer down at Wollongong University. I also discovered that Ian, in 2008 wrote a book titled 'Harold's Diary' Ian mentioned about his father being in the services in the World War.

How his father didn't talk much about his experiences during the war and it was only after his father died in 1982 that Ian discovered his father had kept a diary. From this discovery Ian became interested in

researching those years, with the result of this book being written. I do remember the very pleasant Reece family who for some years were residents of Kempsey and were involved in community organisations."

Mrs Dawson correctly remembered Mr Reece's occupation, a local newspaper report states he transferred from Cooma to Kempsey to join the staff of the Clerk of Petty Sessions as Sheriff's Officer in 1928. After returning from World War 1, Harry Reece had married Eveline Cook, the daughter of Frank and Mary Cook of West Kempsey, which may explain their interest in Kempsey. A former stalwart of the Returned Sailors' and Soldiers' Imperial League (RSSIL) in Cooma, Harry joined the Kempsey Branch at a time when it had just been reformed following a lapse of several years. He served as President for a number of years.

### *Valedictory*

## **NOEL HENRY WOODWARD**

25th May, 1925 - 29th November, 2012

Noel was born in "Down" Private Hospital, Kempsey, with Nurse Kirkpatrick as the mid-wife. He was the fifth child of Jack & Emilie (Holtz) Woodward of "Kentucky", Kinchela Creek. With his siblings he attended Summer Island School and then stayed with his Grandmother Woodward and gained his Intermediate Certificate at Kempsey High School.

In June, 1947 Noel married Joyce Irwin and together they reared three children, Margaret, Robbin and Christopher. Most of his life was spent on the dairy farm but when this became uneconomical he turned his hand to being a motor mechanic, panel beater-spray painter and also paspalum seed picker.

Noel and Joyce purchased "Kentucky", Fairweather's Lane after his father's death in 1959 and they continued to dairy until Joyce's illness in 1983. They sold the farm and moved to Kemp Street where Noel lived until his death. He turned the garage into a

woodworker's paradise and began making cedar clocks. Twenty-two of them are Grandfather clocks; also large and small wall clocks, mantel clocks and dear little dressing table clocks. He also made other items as required but loved working with cedar.

Shortly after Joyce's death he became a member of the Macleay River Historical Society where he became a valued member. In 2007 Noel was made a Life Member of the Society in appreciation for the dedication and commitment he made to the Society after becoming a member in 1993.

He manned the desk where he was a wealth of knowledge; he repaired and restored many exhibits, built shelves, frames and stands for exhibits and boxes for glass negatives.

Noel married Ruth Gorman (Rowe) in June 2003 and they continued their Museum work together until Noel's illness last July. Noel is greatly missed.

*LEFT: Noel with Ruth and Effie Curnoe at the presentation of his Life Membership to the society*

Written by Ruth Woodward



*Mr H Reece, Angus McNeil Collection MRHS*

In 1937 Harry was transferred to Bathurst and at a eulogy at the Kempsey RSSIL Branch, the incoming President, H H Bird, spoke very highly of Mr Reece's work particularly during a critical stage during the League's history. At a sendoff from the Kempsey Methodist congregation around the same time, Harry was described along with his wife as staunch workers for the Church.

Harry's son Ian published his father's war diary under the title *Harold's Diary - an Australian digger's records from World War I*.

Our thanks to Mrs Dawson for her contributions.

### **The Emms Rustic Chair**

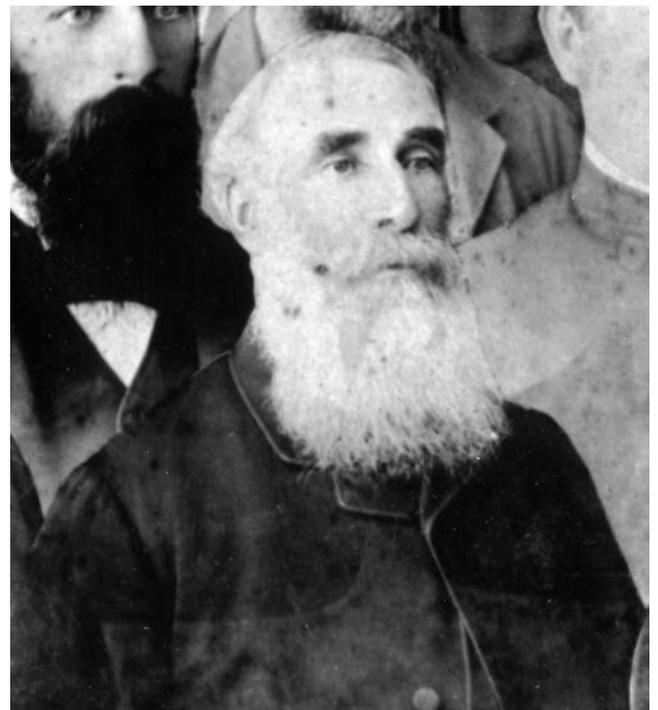
In a recent letter to the Society, Mr Clifford Lancaster of South West Rocks mentioned a wood framed chair in the Museum, and formerly owned by his grandfather Mr W Arthur, said to have been the first permanent resident of South West Rocks. The chair was donated to the Museum by Mr and Mrs Dick Miles in 2009. It can be seen in our Museum near the doors leading out to the Settlers Cottage. The available documentation states it was made by Jonathan Emms at his Greenhill workshop in the 1880's.

Jonathan Emms was born in Norfolk, England on 27 May 1838 and left England at the age of eighteen. He spent seven years gold-mining in New Zealand and Victoria before coming to the Lower Macleay in 1864 and settling near Frederickton. He built a shack and tried to farm the land and raise pigs. A continuing battle with dingoes attacking his stock lead him to take land west of Greenhill, where he grew grapes and fruit.

He built a slab cottage and workshop on the Armidale Road, near where the Gun Club now stands. Pear trees were still growing near the Gun Club a few years ago. Around 1871 he married Mary Ann Fisk in Kempsey. Of the ten children, only about four, two daughters and two sons, appear to have survived into adulthood.

Mr and Mrs Emms moved into the township of Kempsey where he opened up a shop in Belgrave Street, Loma's Fabrics. Before the development of the Kempsey Mall, a weatherboard building existed which at one time was occupied by this business. The building was once boarded to the footpath.

The chair was hand made using local timbers at his workshop on the Armidale Road, for William Arthur, owner of the Jubilee (now Pacific) Guest House. It was made from timbers gathered from the bush, intact with their original gnarled twists, with each piece selected to fit into the design of the chair. An extract from notes



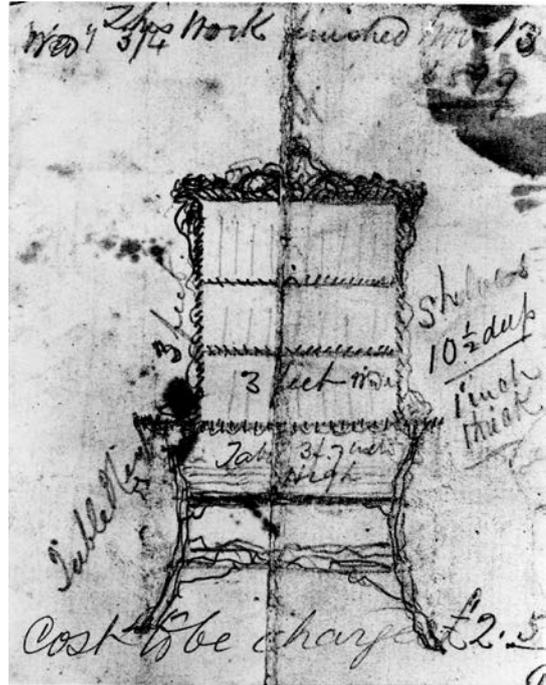
*Jonathan Emms*

written in his own hand reads "For use to Aiwyn, Wes and Cliff. Box limbs the best for sides and backs of chairs with straight halfpieces of poles of bloodwood sawn down the middle first, also grubby pieces cleaned out. Other chairs as above then work the sets with box limbs and remember to tap each piece to see if sound"

Mr. Emms was a fine craftsman and made precise diagrams for each piece of furniture using a lead pencil. His family still has a small collection of his drawings which show that he also made bush houses, garden seats, hat racks and hall stands. Photographs held by the Macleay Valley Historical Society contain examples of his pencil drawings.

The diagrams include hat stands, a fernery and a chair. The detail of the fernery drawing clearly indicates the precise guidelines to construct an object and also indicates his skills as a craftsman.

Rustic furniture made from natural timber forms was very popular in Australia in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Long popular in England, rustic furniture glorified nature and trees and the simple pleasures of country life. It enjoyed a surge in popularity with the Gothic revival in England in the



Drawings of the chair by Jonathon Emms

1820's and 1830's and spread to America and Australia. An article on making rustic furniture from the *Scientific American* reprinted in the *Australian Town and Country Journal* in January 1878 may have inspired many people like Jonathan Emms to try their hand at it.

#### References:

Research of John Russell

*Australian Country Furniture*, Hooper, Toby and Juliana

MRHS Journal No 43, October 1988

## Volunteer News

The Society welcomes new volunteers working at our Museum. These include:

Richard Mohr – Publications

Ken Brown – Front Desk and Research

Russell McKenzie – Collections

Sam Killmore – Photography (during University break)

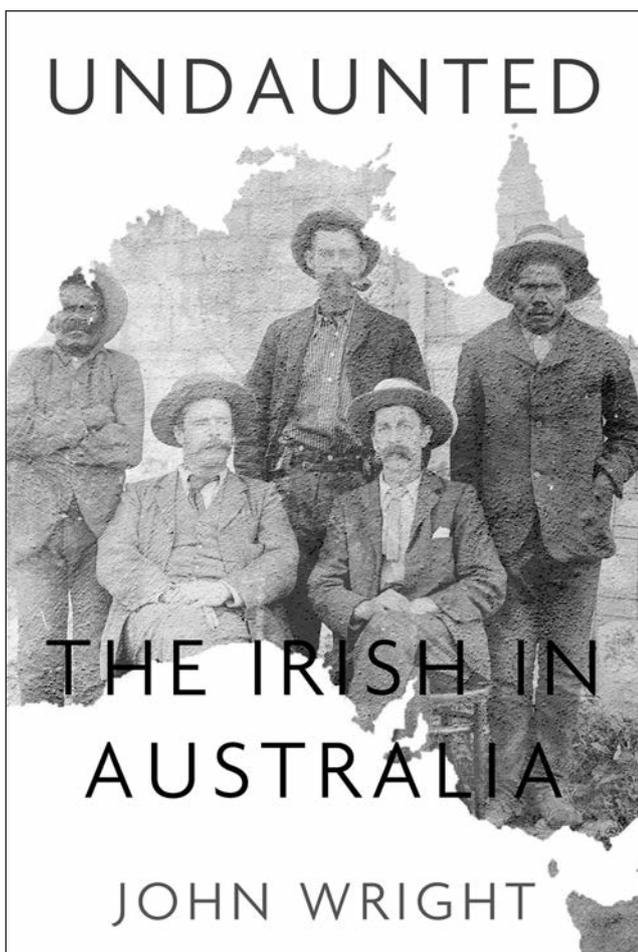
For the first time (I think), the 2011 Census collected statistics on volunteers. This showed that 17.9% of people (4,062 people) in the Kempsey Local Government Area (LGA) did voluntary work through an organisation or group in the previous twelve months. This compares favourably with the NSW average of 16.9% but not as good as our neighbours in Port Macquarie LGA where the rate was 20.7%.



Emms Chair donated to the museum

## Midwife Mary of Kempsey

A new book recently published by the History Press, Ireland contains a chapter on Nurse Kirkpatrick of Kempsey. Titled *Undaunted – Stories of the Irish In Australia*, it was written by John Wright and should be available in Australia this month. *Undaunted* is a collection of true stories about Irish men and women who travelled to Australia in search of a better life and battled against the odds in a remote and harsh world. Nurse Kirkpatrick features as “Midwife Mary”, one of twenty-nine stories in the book.



### Our Affiliations

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



## Macleay River Historical Society

*Office Bearers:*

**President**

Phil Lee

**Vice President**

Garry Munday

**Secretary & Public Officer**

Pam Parmenter

**Treasurer**

Barbara Coughran

**Patrons**

Billie Crawford

Terry Eakin

Geraldine Yabsley

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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**

*Monday:* Ruth Woodward

*Tuesday:* Peggy Gould

*Wednesday:* Peggy Gould

*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