



MACLEAY RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

May, 2015

Number 11

Annual Report

Following is my Annual Report presented at our recent Annual General Meeting on 17 March 2015.

2014 saw our first Education Programme with Bellbrook School participating. The day was a great success and positive feedback was received from all students attending. We hope to follow up this involvement of schools and the public with our Museum during 2015 and I hope everyone can give Lee Hoinville, our Education Officer, all the support she needs. It is great to see the Museum come alive on these days, making up for some days when we hardly get a soul through our doors.

Also during the year we completed the 2014 Standards Programme run by Museums and Galleries NSW and thanks to Ruth, Dianne, Barbara and Jan for their assistance with this challenging Programme. Our practice was measured against the *The National Standards for Australian Museums and Galleries* and we passed with flying colours.

Our reviewers wrote: "Opening the museum seven days a week is a fantastic achievement. The Museum clearly has a very committed group of volunteers and is to be congratulated on managing an interesting complex – a purpose built Glenn Murcutt-designed museum, Settler's Cottage and recreated cottage garden."

During the year we unfortunately saw the departure of Peggy Gould from Research, moving away from this area, and also Effie's well-earned retirement from counter and mailroom duties. We still need to attract more volunteers, we featured appeals on our website and also on our new brochure but still need people with contacts to put the word out. Our computer resources are being stretched but this is one problem I will be happy to take on if we get more people on board.

We completed the Waterways Project (renamed Our Rivers, Our History) in conjunction with other Mid North Coast Historical Societies thanks to Garry Munday, Tom and Peter. The work can now be seen on E-Hive and there will be an official launch in Port Macquarie later this month. The Migration Heritage Project was also completed involving us supplying photographs of migrants from non-English backgrounds.

This year we had a couple of promising meetings with Kempsey Shire Council and discussions included the building condition, new storage shed, our lease and the end of cash collection for the centre.

I wish to thank all volunteers for their support and cooperation during the year, including all those I have not mentioned already in this Report.

Phil Lee
President

President Report

In 2015 we have already taken on board six new volunteers. We welcome Dr Noeline Kyle, Peter Lovedee, Stephanie Lee, Fred Coveny, Leah Taylor and Treve Cheers. All volunteers were interviewed and

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accepted, and have completed the new Volunteer Induction Package we have put together during our 2014 Standards Programme. We still have vacancies for volunteers so if you know of anyone who can help, please contact us.

We are privileged to have had a well-known author and researcher in Noeline join us, we can now claim to have about half a dozen published authors amongst our volunteers. This is a strength we will be able to build on in the future.

Lee Hoinville, our education officer, has attracted a wide group of primary schools this year to our educational programmes. Themes included World War 1 and later this year Lee is looking at extending the programme to include secondary schools. This is a very effective way of involving the wider community in our Museum, and we have received some very positive evaluations from participating schools.

During March, we had a visit from the Melville High

Year 11 Aboriginal Studies class. A presentation on our extensive resources on Aboriginal History was made by volunteer Tom Plunkett and was very well received. We hope to see them back here in the near future so we can assist them with their studies.

The Department of Education and Training has registered our Museum as a child-related employer for the purposes of employment screening and we have made every effort to provide a safe and comfortable environment for students and teachers to learn in.

We have received the Construction Certificate for our new shed and our builder has now been instructed to proceed. The shed will be used for storage and will enable us to be more flexible in rotation of our displays and exhibitions. Completion will also mean we can save rental on three offsite storage units we currently hire.

I attended the launch of the Our Rivers, Our History Project along with Peter Ryan and Garry and Sue



Launch of Our Rivers, Our History Website in Port Macquarie

Munday in Port Macquarie on 28 April. We met our new member for Oxley there, Melinda Pavey, and she dropped in to our Museum later that week to have a look around and share a cuppa with our volunteers. The website, a virtual exhibition, is at www.oroh.com.au. Involved in this programme were Garry Munday, Tom Plunkett and Peter Ryan.

Phil Lee
President

Research Report

Standardizing the administration of the research service offered by our Society has led to a review of Research Forms. A new research service advisory letter and research request form has been released, and a research manual and detailed list of research resources have been compiled by Phil Lee.

In February, 2015, we welcomed Professor Noeline Kyle to the research team. Noeline is a published author and a specialist in the history of the Kyle family, and history of the midwives and nurses in the Macleay Valley, and regularly conducts workshops and lectures in the city. Noeline has already completed two research enquiries and is working on Les Hobsons' research

request which could add another midwife to Noeline's list of those who worked in the Macleay.

We also welcomed Leah Taylor to the team and she is working on research enquiries on Tuesday's, having completed training. Vicki wanted to know about her ancestor Mazarakis who was supposed to have conducted a business in Smith Street, Kempsey in the early 1900's. This research was carried out by Leah who found that Andrew Mazarakis was associated with the Lahana Brothers who operated an oyster salon, fruit and confectionery shop near the Post Office. The business was sold to the Mottee brothers in 1919, later to become the Busy Bee café. One of the Mottee family was consulted during the research process and offered his contact details to the enquirer which was greatly appreciated. The Lahana, Mazarakis and Mottee families all originated from the small Greek island of Kythera which by 1940 was estimated to have sent around 2,200 emigrants to Australia.

A great effort has been put in by those writing research articles, journals and books over the last year. These documents assist many people to find the history of the Macleay Valley from the comfort of their armchair, and stimulate others to contact MRHS by email, telephone, letter, or by walking in, because of the interest history generates.

A scrapbook display during April showcased many different family names connected with World War 1 on the Macleay, so be sure to drop in to the Kempsey Museum for a look at this new trend in presenting photographs and information.

David asked whether the Gladstone skiff was a Macleay invention during the late 19th Century. A search of the local newspapers did not find any mention of it at the time, suggesting it wasn't. A book published in 2011 on rowing history then confirmed that it was invented by Tom Stratton of Stockton, Newcastle and named after W E Gladstone, the British Prime Minister of the time.

Families researched during the past few months included Gilfillan, Kemp (descendants of Robert Augustus Haddon), Welch, Avery (Violet May), Bethel, Day, Weeks, Huxley, Smith and Lazelle.

Currently we are researching Menger, Addison, Perrin, Johnston and Dash families.



World War 1 Soldier (Coleman?)

Topics researched were the Gladstone skiff, currently we are researching defenestration (people sucked out of windows) and defunct Kempsey Railway Stations (Kundabung, Eungai, Tamban).

Locations researched included the Traveller's Rest Hotel, we are researching Comara Station, 43 Smithtown Road (Seven Oaks), Boyter's Lane, Hat Head settlement and 3 Geoffrey Debenham Street at the moment.

Thank you to the researchers diligently working on such a wide variety of subjects.

Dianne Nolan
Research Manager

Photography Report

Ken from the Kempsey-Macleay RSL Sub-Branch brought in a framed photograph of a World War 1 soldier asking if we could help identify him. We found a matching photograph in our Angus McNeil collection captioned "Coleman", the trouble is in identifying which one? Six Colemans from the Macleay served in World War 1 – Albert, Arnold, Edward Burdett Carlton, Sidney Harold, William and William Arthur. If you can help please contact the Sub-Branch or the Museum.

Phil Lee's booklet *The Macleay Remembers, The Centenary of World War I*, was a hit. He put a lot of work into it and it has paid off with a very pleasing volume of information and photographs. Well done Phil.

Another exciting collection of photographs has been donated to the Museum. Ruth Woodward has kindly allowed us to scan an album kept by Trooper David Rowe during his service in the Light Horse 1916-1919. David Rowe took his camera to war with him and even developed his own photographs which he sent back to his family, fortunately with captions neatly written on the back. How exciting it is to come behind him almost 100 years later and see the things he saw and read what he wrote, probably within days of taking the photograph. We read the books and we see the re-enactments and documentaries of those extraordinary men and their horses, but this is something even more special. Thank you Ruth.

Roger Wilson has kindly donated more photographs from his collection. This time he has sent us a small

collection of photographs of the 1949-1950 floods. Some of the photographs are similar to those we have but we accept all photographs as some of ours might have been cropped and others may have more detail. Some were the next photograph on the roll of film and may have been taken slightly further along the street. We appreciate each and every one of them.

Since Anzac Day we have had two albums of photographs of soldiers at the Gladstone Heritage Hotel hoping that some of the patrons might recognize an image from their family records. The Licensee kindly permitted us to leave them with him for a few weeks. We will contact him and arrange to pick them up in the hope that there might have been some response.

We attended Noeline Kyle's Book Launch at the Slim Dusty and congratulate her on her achievement with her latest publication *Ghost Child*.

Many thanks to Russell McKenzie for creating little custom-made wooden boxes for our glass negatives. They have to be just the right size and shape for our storage area and we appreciate the time Russell takes to produce exactly what we want.

We also thank Fay Richardson for her kindness in producing Red Poppies to attach to our photographic display in our gallery. They give the display quite a lift. Thank you Fay.

Andre Gildea earlier this year made a presentation to one of our general meetings on his global social history project, Finders Café, which has now been launched. Our Society offered the use of some of our photographs to kick start the project. Finders Café has a Macleay connection, Andrew being a direct descendant of Dr George Gildea widely regarded as Kempsey's first doctor. The website may be accessed at www.finderscafe.com.

Peter from Dalaigur Preschool at Greenhill called in to see if we had any material they could use for their 50th anniversary in June. We were able to provide Peter with numerous newspaper articles from our Freedom from Hunger files on the Preschool, and scans of photographs from our Macleay Argus negative collection.

Judy Waters
Manager Photographics

Museum Report

We had a call from Kerrie from Taree who had bought an old door and leadlight window at the Barsby's auction. The window was the original fanlight over the main entrance to the Barsby building and bears the name "Macleay Buildings" in gilt lettering. Kerrie had been advised that the window should belong to a Historical Society and offered it to us in return for any of our surplus items. I gave Kerrie some stained glass windows from my own collection which proved acceptable. The old door was the front door of the former Macleay Argus building in Smith Street. The "Macleay Buildings" window has been installed above the courtyard doors opposite the Office.

The Macleay Argus were impressed with our November 2014 Journal on 100 years of Anzac, 1914 and asked us to provide a commemorative booklet which was published on Anzac Day this year. Unfortunately, the scale of the publication did not permit inclusion of all of the Macleay servicemen and women who enlisted in World War 1, we hope to rectify this in future Journals.

Garry Munday's cricketing book was of great interest to recent visitor Bob Davis, who is a descendant of "Possum" Davis, one of the True Australians cricket team of the 1890's.

The M&G NSW VIM Small Grant Application has

been completed and submitted by the due date. This was largely put together by Lee Hoinville and is for hands on material to support a secondary school education programme on World War 1. We have applied for the Grant to buy soldiers' and nurses' uniforms with accessories and we should know outcomes in about one month.

As well as completing educational programmes for primary schools, Lee Hoinville and her helpers found time to put together a successful Anzac Commemoration Day on Saturday 18 April. Thanks to all volunteers who helped on Saturday giving up their valuable weekend time, it is really appreciated. The following review was found on Facebook:

"Great day at Kempsey Museum thank you Lee Hoinville. The kids had a ball and learnt a lot. There was a medal with Simpson and his donkey. I explained the story to Bradley, so that is all he talks about now. We were talking about a song and he said "like Simpson and his donkey", he coloured in a horse and buggy "like Simpson and his donkey".

They loved the tent "hostile" and giving Mummy needles, hand washing, crutches racing, dress up, flag signals (semifores). Great Fun!"

Phil Lee

Exploring our Collection – The Red Baron Relics

Among our military history collection are two relics from the Fokker Dr 1 Triplane flown by the World War 1 German air ace Manfred von Richtofen. The plane was brought down behind Allied lines by ground fire on 21 April 1918 and von Richtofen killed.

Manfred Albrecht Freiherr von Richthofen was born near Breslau, Silesia on 2 May 1892 into a family belonging to the Prussian aristocracy. This locality is now part of present-day Poland and was one of the last bastions of Imperial Germany. All male members of the von Richtofen family were entitled to use the title "free lord" (baron) although this was not a hereditary title. The author Frieda von Richtofen, who was to

marry the English novelist D H Lawrence in 1914, was a distant relative.

Having commenced military training at the age of eleven, Manfred passed out as a lieutenant in the 1st Regiment Uhlans (cavalry) also in 1914. He saw service in Russia. France and Belgium however the advent of trench warfare saw his regiment dismounted and relegated to other duties. Manfred requested a transfer to the Air Service which was accepted in 1915.

In September 1916, he joined the fighter squadron Jasta 2 and became Germany's leading fighter pilot. In January 1917 he received the Blue Max (Ordre Pour la



Our Red Baron relics

Merite), the highest honour at that time and became commander of Jasta 11. Around this time he and other German pilot took to painting their planes red. He continued his string of successful kills of Allied aircraft during the rest of 1917, however on 21 April 1918 he received a fatal wound. Pursuing a Sopwith Camel over British lines near Corbie, France, von Richtofen came within range of the 53rd Australian Field Artillery. His Fokker Dr 1 triplane was hit by machine gun fire although a Canadian pilot Captain A R Brown was officially credited with downing the aircraft.

Von Richtofen was buried with full military honours, whilst the wreckage of his plane was targeted by souvenir hunters. One of those to souvenir parts of his plane was Private William Flanigan of the Australian Army Postal Corps. Posted to 11th Infantry Brigade Headquarters in April 1918, Private Flanigan obtained a belt buckle from the pilot's harness, part of the aircraft's wing and a piece of red fabric. In the 1950's, William "Bill" Flanigan became a prominent Kempsey citizen founding the Kempsey and Macleay Horticultural Society, the schoolboys rugby league carnival and was foundation president of the North Coast Rugby League (he donated the Flanigan Shield for Group 2 competition). He served Kempsey Municipal Council as an alderman for nine years and founded the Kempsey Festival of Spring in 1955. The Red Baron relics were donated to our Society around 1964. Bill Flanigan passed away in 1977 aged 83.

Photographs of the relics were viewed by Fokker Dr1 expert, Langdon Badger now of the South Australian Aviation Museum who believed them to be authentic.

References:

Baker, David 1990 *Manfred von Richtofen: The man and the aircraft he flew*
MRHS files

The Society received a copy of the August 1973 Newsletter of The Australian Society of World War 1 Aero Historians edited by Robert Buies' daughter, Mrs Merleine Chidzey.

Can you help?

William Dixon was born in Preston Lancashire in 1878, the son of William and Jane Dixon. On 15 April 1911, William junior married Elizabeth Alice Schofield.

The couple planned to make a new life in Australia, but Elizabeth quickly fell pregnant and became ill. It was decided that William would go ahead and Elizabeth and the child would follow. However, Elizabeth died very quickly after the birth and the child (Florence) was unofficially adopted by William's brother Frederick and his wife Edith, who had a young family. The agreement seems to have been that Florence would join her father William in Australia at some point, and



William Dixon (Angus McNeil Collection, MRHS)

William did write very affectionate letters to his family until 1921 when the last letter was received.

William arrived at Mackay Queensland on 26 February 1912, on the *SS Oswestry Grange*. He stayed in Mackay with Michael and Mary Reardon until approx 1914, and then moved around the eastern coast of Queensland and New South Wales for work.

He was last heard of in November 1921 when he was manager of the Royal Hotel in Kempsey, NSW. After that his family lost contact with him, and did not hear from him again. There is a possibility that Mary and Michael Reardon moved to Melbourne and that after 1921 William moved there too, but there is nothing to corroborate this.

Family rumour was that he may have gone to Melbourne and he may have followed the Reardons.

In his last letter written 13 November 1921 on Royal Hotel letterhead, William said the Hotel was changing hands and he was fearful of losing his job. He mentioned a recent flood and says unemployment was rife in Kempsey. He enclosed a £5 Postal Note for a

Christmas present for the children, and hoped Florrie was in the best of health. An Angus McNeil portrait of himself was enclosed.

Linden Hughes, from the United Kingdom, is now seeking information on William on behalf of his daughter Florence now 103 years old. Linden forwarded the Angus McNeil photograph sent by William in 1921 which matches one held by our Society. If you have any information on William Dixon, please contact us.

Publications News

The Macleay River Historical Society was pleased to be selected by the Macleay Argus to compile a history of Kempsey and its servicemen and women in the First World War entitled *The Macleay Remembers* to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of ANZAC. Copies were distributed with the Mid Coast Observer newspaper prior to Anzac Day. If you missed a copy, these are still available from the Society.

Garry Munday's latest book *Rugby: The Game They Play in Heaven and on the Macleay* has been published by the Society and will be launched shortly. Garry's other new book *Macleay Valley Cricket in the 19th Century* is also available.

One of our new volunteers, Professor Noeline Kyle, will launch her latest book *Ghost Child* on 23 May. The book is a memoir of her childhood on Nulla Nulla Creek at the end of World War 2. Caroline Carey will launch a new and revised edition of *Tales of Trial Bay* on 1 June. Both books will be available for purchase from our Museum.

This month, the Society will publish its 200th Journal



William Dixon – Portrait sent to his family in England in 1921
(courtesy Linden Hughes)

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 on basic Research Fee (\$25.00 instead of \$30.00 per subject)
- Discount of 10% on Photograph orders (excluding postage)

after the first Journal was published in 1984. Our Journals have attracted a lot of favourable comments on their quality and range of subjects. Contributions from members and non-members are welcome, please contact us if you are interested. Smaller articles for our Newsletter are also sought, these should be no more than 500 words long.

New Additions to our Library

Clark, Chris 2010 *The Encyclopedia of Australia's Battles*

Clarke, K 1999 *Busy Wires: The Telegraph in Australia*

Elder, Bruce 2003 *Blood on the Wattle*

Johnson, Clive 2008 *Australians Awarded*

Jones, C Neil 2002 *Footprints in the Dust* (McIlwain,

Jones families of Eungai)

Kyle, Noeline 2015 *Ghost Child*

New South Wales Commonwealth Electoral Roll

1935 Cowper (CD-ROM)

Reid, R 2004 *Australian Family Histories: A Bibliography and Index*

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

The Angus McNeil Photographic Collection



Kempsey Museum
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Macleay River Historical Society

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Vice Presidents

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Tom Plunkett

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Ruth Woodward

Treasurer

Barbara Coughran

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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, Leah Taylor

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