



MACLEAY RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

November, 2015

Number 13

President Report

Our new storage shed was finally completed on 11 August. The contents of three rented offsite storage units have been moved into it saving us rental of \$143.00 per week. Unfortunately, we were unsuccessful in winning a grant for the building so we have had to meet the full cost of the shed out of our retained earnings. The shed will house the larger part of our collection of books, newspapers and Government Gazettes and a separate library unit has been constructed.

Noeline has completed our grant application for a 2015 Community Building Partnership Grant (CBP). We are applying for a permanent security fence around the cottage and new shed and have lodged a Development Application. Owner's approval from Crown Lands for the fence, as well as a Development Approval from Kempsey Shire Council have been received.

On Tuesday August 4 we were visited by Deputy Premier and Arts Minister Troy Grant, also local Member for Oxley Melinda Pavey who presented our cheque for M&G NSW VIM Grant of \$1,000. We got some good publicity on Melinda's Facebook page and in the Macleay Argus.

Dianne Nolan represented us as guest speaker at the Macleay Pensioner's League on 3 August on the topic of the past, present and future of our Museum and Society. One of the members Bill Kemp dropped in two days later to share some more Kemp family history with us.

Congratulations to Margaret Jopling who made the 2015 Honour Roll of Hidden Treasures selected by the Rural Womens Network, NSW Department of

Primary Industries. Margaret was nominated by Noeline Kyle.

The Citation is as follows - *Margaret Jopling [Aldavilla]*

One of Margaret Jopling's great passions is her work with the Police Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) in Kempsey. For over 15 years she has tutored young people to improve their literacy and numeracy so they can return to school or enter a TAFE course. Margaret also helps with reception, vacation care and other activities. She is on the PCYC Advisory Committee and helps as a maths mentor. Margaret's patience, caring, dedication and absolute commitment to overcoming disadvantaged students' welfare gives their lives meaning and richness. Margaret worked as a respite coordinator at Booroongen Djugun Aboriginal Corporation in the 1980s and 1990s.

She is vice-president of Kempsey University of the Third Age and has been a class leader for many years, teaching classes in table tennis, squash, swimming, walking and maths. Margaret has always been a keen swimmer and was the local swim club treasurer and secretary for many years.

CONTENTS

President's Report	1
Research Report	2
Photography Report	2
Museum Report	3
Tragedy of Absalom Lyons	4
Nurse Agnes Rickerby	5
Trunk Road 75	6
Can You Help? Midwives of the Macleay	7
Recent Additions to our Library	8
Our Affiliations	8
Office Bearers	8

She continues as a committee member, still teaches swimming and despite being in her 70s has won medals in Masters Championships. Sport has played a large role in Margaret's life and she has used her love of education, the outdoors and physical activity to give back to her community. She was an organiser for the Kempsey current committee member of Kempsey TableTennis Club. Margaret has been a volunteer at the Kempsey Museum for 15 years and volunteers at the Kempsey Visitor Information Centre. She has received many awards for her full-time volunteering and is an absolute Hidden Treasure in this community.

Congratulations also to John Bowell who received an Order of Australia Award at Government House, Sydney from His Excellency General the Governor David Hurley. The Citation read "For service to local government, and to the community of Kempsey". John was our patron for many years until his retirement from public life in 2013.

On Wednesday 28 October we were visited by Kempsey Mayor and our Patron, Liz Campbell and Julia Morrell, the Executive Assistant and Curator for the Slim Dusty Centre. Were we pleased to be able to show our guests over our Museum and are looking forward to a return visit to the Slim Dusty Centre so we can explore areas for cooperation such as Heritage Trails and joint exhibitions.

Phil Lee
President

Research Report

During the quarter ended 30 October 2015, family research requests and enquiries were received for O'Brien, Alexander, Bell, Weingarh, Kidd, Barnett, Trees, Everson, Thomas Smith Diaries, McGilvray, Professor Alan Voisey, Trees, Coleman, Simon, Morris, Hudson, Lawrence, Ramsay, A J Druitt and Avery.

Location research has involved the site of Melville High School, Carnation Cottage, Kinchela Boys

Home, Hat Head, Trial Bay, John Verge's house, Seashore Lane, and Jerseyville.

Topics of interest were early Aboriginal history of Hat Head and the Lower Macleay, the impacts of Akubra on Kempsey, closure of the King Gee Factory, Wesleyan Methodists, Christian Israelites in Kempsey and the shipwreck of the *Eliza* in February 1855 at Hannah (now Anna) Bay.

The *Eliza* was bringing to the Macleay from Sydney the newlywed Lane brothers, Edwin and Thomas, who had married two of the daughters of Thomas and Elizabeth Nance in a double wedding. There were no deaths but the passengers lost all their belongings and some had to walk thirty miles (50 kms) along the beach to Newcastle for assistance. Also affected by this shipwreck were the young Trees family of Euroka who lost a tent, furniture and other belongings.

Leah Taylor has found fulltime employment but will try to come in once a fortnight to work with our Research Team. We wish her well in her new career.

Thank you to all involved in the research process.

Dianne Nolan
MRHS Research Manger

Photography Report

Peter Lovedee has completed digitising the Admission Registers of West Kempsey Public School which we have had on loan. Copies of the files are being prepared to be given back to the School along with the original documents.

Donations included a collection of photographs of 1950's Country Music performers by Mrs Basham of Cootamundra, many signed. Artists included Slim Dusty and Joy McKean, Heather McKean, Reg Lindsay and Chad Morgan. During this time the artists used to perform on the country show circuit.

The photographs have been scanned and the digital

images added to our collection. The originals were given to the Slim Dusty Centre as that might have been the original intention of the donor when she mailed them to us.

The Macleay Argus contacted us re photographs they could use in a calendar they are considering producing. I selected a number of unthemed images for them avoiding duplications of what we are doing. The calendar should generate photograph sales for us.

Phil Lee for Judy Waters
Manager Photography

Museum Report

Paul Miles has been working on our Light Horse saddle and has polished it up, and loaned us a gun bucket and more authentic stirrups. He has made up new signage for the display. Paul also donated a set of convict leg irons from his grandfather's collection.

The Rudder Diaries have been reformatted and bound with finished artwork by Gary Marshall. Three copies have been made of each – one set for our library, one set for David and one set for the Kempsey Shire Library.

Mr Philip Everson has signed a license to publish agreement for his Everson Families book and we will start researching new material and corrections. Noeline Kyle has taken on this project and will work with Zelma Wood.

The Agricultural Display has been rearranged and needs attention to labelling and interpretive signage.

We have started to put up QR codes at some points

throughout the Museum in areas such as Military History, Natural History, World War 1 and Glassware. Suggestions about others are welcome. QR codes can link to You Tube, Facebook, websites etc. and content should ideally be no longer than 3-4 minutes.

A Publishing Sub-committee will be formed when Garry Munday returns, to plan and control all publishing done by the Society. Book sales are currently low, at the Port Macquarie Family History Fair we only sold \$50 worth of books. The 2016 Calendar is almost ready and we have two quotes.

The next two Journals will be The Macleay Valley and the Great War – 2015 (November 2015) by myself, and Kempsey and the McLeay River 1852 (February 2016) by Dianne Nolan.

The K2K Report on Ravenswood Road, Kundabung has been received from Niche Environment and Heritage and is a comprehensive document which will add to our research material. Niche will arrange delivery of salvaged materials in the near future and RMS Media will issue a press release in due course. The Head



The new Macleay River Historical Society storage shed



“Absalom Lyons Junior (Courtesy Helen Stokes)”

Archaeologist, Fiona Leslie, made special mention of our volunteer Leah Taylor as a valued team member during the dig.

Our Facebook page continues to attract wide attention thanks to Noeline’s hard work.

We were successful in obtaining our third Community Heritage Grant, this time for \$1,265.00 to restore Tom Saul’s rowing vest. Community Heritage grants are administered by the National Library of Australia. The vest was donated to the Museum some years ago together with Tom Saul’s rowing skiff. Whilst the skiff was fully restored by the late George Crossingham, the vest is in poor state of repair with insect damage and fading.

Journalist Sue Paterick visited our Museum on Friday and took photographs for a feature she is doing for us for the Your Local Independent newspaper.

Ruth, Dianne and I attended a workshop on Disaster Recovery at the RSL on Wednesday 11 November. There was also a meeting of the Museums Australia Mid North Coast Chapter and I was nominated as a committee member.

Phil Lee

Tragedy of Absalom Lyons

On Wednesday 19 October 1921, during the milking hour on his parents’ dairy farm at Jerseyville, nine year old Absalom Lyons set out to look for birds eggs for a friend. When he had not returned by dusk his father took a dog and went to search for him. The dog located Absalom junior lying in the long grass and his father called out “Are you there Absalom?” and the boy faintly answered “Yes.” He was discovered to have terrible injuries and said he had been gored by the farm bull. His father carried the young boy some distance to the house from which a man ran some two miles (to Jerseyville to telephone for medical assistance. Dr McElhone was at Jerseyville by 9.15 pm but the boy had passed away half an hour previously, having remained conscious until the end.

An examination at the scene of the accident the following morning found that young Absalom had been tossed about twenty feet by the bull and had then tried to make his way home for about thirty yards before collapsing. The bull, a Durham, was described in the Macleay Chronicle report as a vicious beast although the Macleay Argus described it as a quite animal, a pet the children used to ride on. The beast was destroyed.

After a service at Smithtown Church, the funeral procession moved to Frederickton Cemetery with pupils of Smithtown Convent and Rainbow Reach Public School marching ahead of the cortege before forming a guard of honour. The Reverend Father O’Reagan officiated at the graveside.

Tragedy again struck the family eighteen months later with the sudden death of Absalom Lyons Senior, the younger Absalom’s father, at the young

age of forty years. He had been a fine footballer and footrunner and left a wife and three daughters. His wife Annie, nee Killmore, now had three young daughters to look after and no way of running a dairy farm. She took the hard decision to move the family to Sydney where they lived with her Mother, Mary Jane Killion, who had left the Macleay area sometime before. Annie went on to live into her late 80's.

Absalom Lyons Senior was the son of Bernard Michael and Elizabeth Lyons, both Irish-born and residents of the Lower Macleay for many years. He had married Annie Killmore, the daughter of Thomas and Mary Jane (nee Wood) Killmore, in 1910.

References:

Macleay Argus files

Macleay Chronicle files

Information from Helen, daughter of Annie Lyons (nee Killion)

Macleay River Historical Society files

Nurse Agnes Rickerby, nee Gill, business woman, midwife, colleague and friend

Agnes Beatrice Selina Gill was the daughter of Silas Gill a farmer at Commandant Hill. Her mother was Martha (nee Durrington). Born in 1889 at Commandant Hill, Agnes was delivered at home by a midwife, Mrs Carter.

In October 1914 Agnes married Herbert George Rickerby, a photographer from Port Macquarie, and a report of the wedding in the Port Macquarie News, notes that the happy couple left for their new home at Port Macquarie immediately after the wedding. It was a short-lived union however. Just three months later Herbert died after an unsuccessful appendectomy operation in February 1915.

One year later in December 1916 Agnes graduated from the Royal Hospital for Women, Paddington with her certified 12 months training completed.



Nurse Rickerby "Nurse Agnes Rickerby (nee Gill) MRHS Collection"

She registered with the Australasian Trained Nurses Association in February 1917. It is interesting to speculate whether she decided to train in midwifery as a way of earning her living, or if this was a way of assuaging her grief or perhaps midwifery was a calling she wanted to follow. In any case Agnes went on to have a successful career in midwifery in Kempsey.

She began her work as the Licensee and Manager at a small maternity hospital called The Nook at Bellingen in 1917 and 1918. Agnes moved back to Kempsey in 1919 establishing The Nook in Tozer Street, West Kempsey. In the same year she acquired Hollywood from Adelaide McCarthy and

Armidale - Kempsey

DIRECT

Motor Service.

WOODWARD'S CAR

Leaves Kempsey

**Every Monday, Wednesday
and Saturday at 8 a.m.**

Leaves Armidale

**Every Tuesday, Friday, and
Saturday at 8 a.m.**

**On Saturdays the Car will go
through to Port Macquarie, leaving
Kempsey about 3.30 p.m., and will
leave Port Macquarie on Monday
mornings at 6 a.m.**

BOOKING OFFICES:

D. CHEERS, Kempsey. 'Phone 173

C. PURKISS, Armidale. 'Phone 358.

**H. Woodward, Proprietor. 'Phone
373, Armidale.**

"Woodward and Purkiss Advertisement Macleay Chronicle
April 2 1939"

moved from Marsh Street to Forth Street. Agnes was in Forth Street of course for the 1921 flood which ravaged her hospital and many other buildings. Adelaide McCarthy (nee Cook), had taken over Hollywood from Nurse Mary Kirkpatrick who left midwifery for some 5 years after her son George was killed in WW1.

Agnes remarried in 1922 to George Brenton in Sydney. She relinquished Hollywood to Nurse Una Jemesen (nee Tessier) who remained until it

closed in early 1951. Hollywood may well be the longest surviving private maternity hospital for Kempsey beginning in 1913 in Marsh Street and ending its days with Nurse Jemesen in Forth Street in 1951. Agnes Gill's story also highlights the close professional and personal links between the midwives of Kempsey. All of these women Adelaide McCarthy, Una Jemesen, Agnes Rickerby, Mary Kirkpatrick and also Mrs Carter were neighbours, friends and midwifery colleagues. Their stories are a fascinating journey through the life, work and community links of small business women in rural Australia.

Noeline Kyle

Trunk Road 75

Dear Phil,

I enjoyed reading the above feature (MRHS Journal, August 2015) as it brought back memories of my experiences of the journey almost 100 years later.

My 1940 Kempsey High School Leaving Certificate results won me a two year scholarship at Armidale Teachers' College 1941-1942. The first problem was how to get to Armidale which my parents solved by booking me on the twice weekly, I think it was, Woodward and Purkiss service. Bidding my parents a teary farewell with an admonition from my mother, "Don't do anything you'd be afraid to tell us", ringing in my ears I boarded the large open-style stretched tourer (probably a Studebaker or Hudson) for the 120 miles (190 km) gut-churning, dust-eating, corrugated ordeal. I had always been prone to car-sickness so it was not a journey I was looking forward to. I can still see the sign at the bottom of "The Big Hill" warning of 12 miles (17 km) of winding road. I was too sick to enjoy the tea stops at Bellbrook and Jeogla and just prayed for the ordeal to end.

As most of the Armidale Teachers' College students came from the few North Coast high schools between Maitland and Murwillumbah, getting home for vacations involved a variety of

routes some of which I experienced. For the first vacation in May 1941 the college hired a W and P school bus for the trip to Kempsey. I remember that it left late at night with light snow falling and the trip down The Big Hill (“the top of an awful mountain”) in the dark on the single vehicle gravel road with the unfenced drop into the Macleay gorge was a white knuckle ride. No one slept. The bus arrived at Kempsey Railway Station at daybreak where students caught trains serving the North Coast and where my parents met me. The return trip was I think again with W and P from Wauchope up the Oxley Highway and was comparatively uneventful. Another route which I took was overnight by train to East Maitland where I changed to one of the north coast mail trains to Kempsey.

The most memorable was, however the May 1942 vacation trip by bus, again at night this time to Grafton only days after the Battle of the Coral Sea. Somewhere east of Ebor the road passed through a short tunnel and there we were halted around midnight by men of the Volunteer Defence Corps. The tunnel was mined and they were to blow it up in the event of a Japanese landing on the North Coast to deny them access to the tablelands. I caught the train south at Grafton and as it passed along the sand dunes between the beach and the aerodrome at Coffs Harbour I saw militia troops guarding the beach which was covered with barbed-wire entanglements while on the ‘drome Lockheed Hudson bombers were on standby.

At home I went to a meeting with my father in the local Clybucca Hall where a National Emergency Co-ordinator explained to the farmers what they had to do in the event of a Japanese landing. All crops had to be destroyed, cars which could not be removed were to be rendered useless, flood boats had to be smashed and at a given signal on the local radio station all stock were to be mustered and driven by experienced drovers up the Kempsey-Armidale road for agistment on tableland farms. The police would be authorised to issue additional petrol coupons to enable families to be evacuated. Nothing was to be left which could aid the enemy.

I cannot remember how I returned but could not help wondering if I would have a farm to come home to for the next vacation.

Les Sullivan, MRHS

Can You Help?

Midwives of the Macleay

Since moving to Lake Cathie last year it has become much more feasible to finalise my research on local midwives and I am especially keen to find more midwives in the Port Macquarie/Hastings area, Macleay Valley and the Armidale region. For the Macleay Valley I have collected 85 names of midwives who worked from 1880s through to 1940.

I am interested in all aspects of the midwives including family background, where they were born, if they married and where they died. However, I am especially interested in their midwifery career, any memories or information on how they operated their hospitals, or if they simply walked to and delivered the babies in patient’s homes. I am also interested in whether these women were trained, if and where they might have established a hospital and other nurses/midwives that might have worked with them. It does help me to complete further research if I can have a full date of birth, marriage date and death date if any, and full first and last names, and all marriages, if known. I am, of course, very interested to receive

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)

photographs of individual midwives, in uniform or not, and their hospitals.

You can contact me on my mobile 0403868051 or email at: noelinekyle@gmail.com

Noeline Kyle

Recent Additions to Our Library

Bellimbopinni Public School *From Boats to Buses to Bypass 1865-2014* 2014

Daker, R *T Building and Ornamental Stones of Australia* 1915 Sydney (E-Book, contains section on Moparrabah Marble)

Etheridge, R *The Dendroglyphs or 'Carved Trees' of New South Wales* 1918 Sydney (E-Book, contains section on Smoky Cape Range carved trees)

Harden, Bob *European Settlement & Pastoralism at Kunderang* 2015 Armidale NSW

Leslie, Dr Fiona *K2K Report on Ravenswood Road, Kundabung* 2015 Niche Environment and Services

Ross, Valerie *A Hawkesbury Story* 1989 Sydney (First Generation of Everingham Family in Australia)

Vine Hall, Nick *Parish Registers in Australia* 1989 Middle Park Vic

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:

President

Phil Lee

Vice Presidents

Garry Munday

Tom Plunkett

Secretary & Public Officer

Ruth Woodward

Treasurer

Barbara Coughran

Patrons

Billie Crawford

Terry Eakin

Geraldine Yabsley

Ald. Liz Campbell

Postal Address

P.O. Box 390, Kempsey, NSW 2440

Phone: (02) 6562 7572

Email: mrhs5@bigpond.com

Website: www.kempseymuseum.org

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