



MACLEAY RIVER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

NEWSLETTER

AUGUST, 2016

Number 16

President's Report

Kempsey Shire Councillors visited the Museum on Tuesday 3 May 10.45am as part of a tour of Council infrastructure and community projects. Judging by the comments in our visitor book, many were suitably impressed.

We have already received several submissions re the use of the Visitor Information Centre after it closes. I propose that we hold a special meeting in about eight weeks time when matters are finalised. Each submission on the use of this space should include a business plan addressing how we make up the loss of income from manning it, and staffing arrangements.

On Friday 9 September we will be hosting a visit from Wauchope District Historical Society re History Week 2016 September 3-11 where the theme is Neighbours. After visiting the Museum the visitors will take a bus tour of the Kempsey district before returning home.

I have supplied some historic Kempsey videos to Annabel and Olivia who are organising the 2016 Macleay River Festival to be held Saturday 24 September 2016. They will edit them to create an audiovisual presentation for the Film Tent. We will have a separate marquee to exhibit some photographs and

artefacts. We will also use the occasion to relaunch Garry's book "Riverboats of the Macleay".

Dianne and myself attended the Access to Funding workshop run by Museums & Galleries NSW at Windsor in July and found it very worthwhile. We received feedback from one of the Grant Assessors there that our Society was highly regarded.

Waterways – Our Rivers Our History has won the 2016 Museums and Galleries National Award for permanent exhibitions in Category 2 – project budget \$20,000 to \$150,000. The awards were announced last month at the MA National conference which was held in New Zealand, however a small awards ceremony took place at the Chapter representatives meeting which Debbie

NOTICE

Unfortunately, due to escalating costs including postage, the Society voted to increase our membership fees commencing from 2017. Membership rates will be as follows from next year:

Membership with pick up Journal from Museum - \$20.00

Membership with Journal/Newsletter posted in DL envelope (folded) - \$25.00

Membership with Journal/Newsletter posted in A4 envelope (unfolded) - \$30.00

Also our Journals will now only be exchanged with those Societies who mail their Journals to us. Our Newsletter will continue to be available for reading or download from our website shortly after printing.

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Sommers attended in Sydney last Friday (17 June). Debbie received one large (A3) certificate and a small certificate (scanned image attached) on behalf of the group.

Stage 2 of the Project has been planned and at a recent meeting it was agreed we should participate. I said that our Society could offer assistance in areas such as Aboriginal History and the development of educational curriculum.

Congratulations to Dianne Nolan who completed a week long volunteer placement at State Records during July, one of only eight for NSW this year. Dianne used the time to enhance her research management skills, particularly in online resources, also gained access to processes and strategies for researching archives with Aboriginal content. These placements are sponsored by Museums & Galleries NSW and are available each year.

During July and August Lee Hoinville again ran successful education programmes for several groups of local school students. Thanks to all our volunteers who helped out at these.

Phil Lee
President

Research Report

The past three month's research requests have kept us busy. Below are some of the files that have been of interest to those inquiring.

Family names included: Willard; Pearce; Goymour; Charters, Sillitoe; Macguire/McGuire; Julian; Nelson; Hooper; Supple; Chapman; Byrnes; Leamy; Egan; Weingarh; Redgate; Ritchie; and many upriver families such as Davis, Rossiter and Dew.

Locations included: Macleay River entrance; Clybucca historical site; Chaddie's store; Darkwater; Frederickton; Debenham family homes "Assea" and "Avoca", Glengarry (Rollands Plains), old Kempsey Power Station in Prince Street, Ply Mill at Greenhill, Hat Head Village and "Waterloo" (Austral Eden property).

Topics included: Kempsey Silver band; Kinchela Boys Home Choir; European tree blazes on Andersons Sugarloaf; and flood levels.

Kempsey Shire Council have again approached us to provide names for road renaming in the Frederickton, South Kempsey and South West Rocks. Council have now offered to submit tentative names to the Geographic Names Board for pre-approval prior to us writing the full report as we have struck one or two duplications.



Research Manager Dianne Nolan about to start her week long Volunteer Placement at State Records NSW

I completed my Volunteer Placement at State Records NSW, Kingswood, during 18-22 July. Thanks to the Society for your support of my application for professional development of my skills as Research Manager. This Volunteer Placement has been a very interesting and dynamic experience and my expectations were exceeded. The Society acknowledges the support of the New South Wales Government through Arts NSW and Museums and Galleries NSW.

Thank you to Noeline, Phil and Research Records volunteers and please keep up the good work.
Kind regards,

Dianne Nolan
MRHS Research Manager

Photography Report

You might recall that last year we received a collection of scanned photographs of the Kempsey district taken around 1893. There were also some taken of the Rollands Plains/Port Macquarie area around the same time. The album of photographs was in the possession of ex-Kempsey radio announcer Roger Wilson and his wife Maureen who now live in Victoria.

Roger phoned recently to say he was on a visit to the Mid North Coast and would call in and donate the actual album to the Museum. Some of the photographs show shops and businesses we have never seen before although we did know where they were. Some of the photographs show the damage caused by the 1893 flood so we know when they were taken.

Our catalogued photograph collection has now reached 51,117 – of these 23,213 are from the Angus McNeil Collection.

Judith Waters

Museum Report

The World War 1 trench reconstruction has been completed by Russell and thanks go to Kempsey SES for their donation of sandbags.

I have been addressing the computer issues raised by Judy Waters in Photography recently. We have had a Network Attached Storage (NAS) system installed which will allow sharing of the Photographic Database across three computers with automatic backup of files to external hard drives. We will eventually relocate all our mission critical data to this system to safeguard this valuable information.

Roads and Maritime Services have finally issued their press release on the Kundabung archaeological dig and we are free to arrange our own publicity. The salvage from the dig is in six archive boxes in the storage shed, however a small selection of artefacts is on display in the centre outside the AMN display. A copy of the Report is in the Research Room but is copyright and for reference only.

We had two more junior volunteers at the Museum during the July school holidays. They assisted with sorting out Macleay Argus photographs, scanning books and filing research material. If you know of any prospective junior volunteers please let us know. They must be accompanied by an adult relative or guardian and the volunteer supervising must have a current Working With Children check. Suggestions for tasks for junior volunteers are also welcome.

Phil Lee
President

Lt Gordon Frederick Nalder

A recent research request from Lee of Queanbeyan brought to our attention the tragic yet fascinating story of Lieutenant Gordon Nalder in World War 1. Gordon was one of the sons of one of Kempsey's earliest surveyors, William Henry Nalder. Lee was enquiring after the identity of the son, known only to them as Laddie, of the Nalder family's aboriginal housekeeper who became Gordon's batman in France in 1917 and who brought home Gordon's diary after his death. Lee's father had transcribed his diary and also wrote a biography, copies of both of these are in the Australian War Memorial.

William Henry Nalder was born in Somersetshire, England around 1854 and came to Australia at the age of fifteen. He took up surveying in Victoria and soon

became proficient in his profession, becoming Government Surveyor in Fiji. Returning to Australia around 1882, he spent most of the remainder of his career in Kempsey as a surveyor in the Lands Department. He was required to do surveys in other areas as well, and was away from home for long periods. By 1896, the family had thirteen children (two of whom died in infancy) and the burden of these absences required the hiring of an aboriginal housekeeper. The housekeeper, and one of her sons, Laddie became well regarded by the Nalder family. Laddie often wrote to the family after his own enlistment in 1916 and there is one surviving postcard which he sent to Gordon's sister, Violet.

William Nalder died suddenly in 1909 after he had been

named as District Surveyor in charge of the recently established Lands Office in West Kempsey. His wife left Kempsey in 1911 for Sydney so the children could find work there to support the family. In 1915 Gordon was living in Mosman with his mother and two sisters, Vie 28 and Beth 22, both of whom had found work in the city. Gordon enlisted in the First AIF that year, along with his brothers Leslie Arnold and Robert Austin. A qualified dentist, he was commissioned as a 2nd Lieutenant in the 17th Battalion on 21 January 1916.

Gordon sailed for France via Egypt with the 17th Battalion on 20 January 1916. After several bouts of illness he rejoined his Battalion in France in December 1916. In early May 1917, the Australian 2nd Division

including Gordon's 17th Battalion, made a fresh attempt to seize a portion of the Hindenburg line at Bullecourt in the battle known as Second Bullecourt. On 3 May Gordon penned a letter to his mother to be sent in the event of his death. He wrote that he had been placed in charge of A Company for the attack, and that if his mother received the letter she would know that he had died for the "greatest cause of all".

There are varying accounts of Gordon's death at Second Bullecourt, the following being possibly most representative of what happened. "He was in the attack at Bullecourt on the night of the 3rd May, 1917. During the initial stages of the attack he was wounded by machine gun fire. On starting back to the dressing station he with his batman was caught in an enemy barrage in which he was mortally wounded and died immediately."

Earlier, Laddie enlisted, went to France and became Lt Nalder's batman. Gordon kept a diary which was

brought back to Australia by Laddie and is now in the Australian War Memorial. Lee asked for help in discovering Laddie's real name.

As Laddie brought back Gordon's diary, he would have been close to him when he was killed and could have been with him at his death. Research on the soldiers close to the Lieutenant when he was hit by the barrage uncovered a Private Sydney Adams Jeffries who enlisted in July 1916 as part of the 4th Reinforcements for the 17th Battalion. On page 18 of the Red Cross file, Pte Jeffries told of seeing Nalder killed by a shell and says he was right alongside at the time.



*William and Elizabeth Nalder and family 1901. Gordon is seated second from right in the first row.
(Courtesy John Holland)*

Another soldier, Lance Corporal

Peter Leather, was also with Gordon when he was killed and is said to have all Nalder's effects.

Peter Leather's birthplace on his World War 1 dossier is given as England so he is unlikely to have Aboriginal heritage. Sydney Jefferies is described as dark complexion and whilst a sample of his handwriting was similar to that of Laddie, a closer comparison shows they are different. So the identity of Laddie remains undiscovered.

References

Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau files 1914-18 War 1DRL/0438 at www.awm.gov.au accessed 8 August 2016
Holland, William 2009 *Lt Gordon Frederick Nalder*
Macleay Argus files
Macleay Chronicle files
National Archives of Australia World War 1 dossiers Series B2455

SOME REFLECTIONS ON THE OLD PACIFIC HIGHWAY



*Pacific Highway Clybucca after roadworks and flooding 1932
by Harold Sullivan, courtesy John Sullivan*

(At 3am on December 22 1989 on the two lane Pacific Highway 480 kilometres north of Sydney and 12 kilometres north of Kempsey at Clybucca, two interstate coaches collided head on at a combined speed of 200 kilometres per hour. The accident, considered one of Australia's worst, killed 35 and injured another 41. Two months earlier 100 kilometres further north near Grafton at 4am, October 20 another coach accident killed 21 and injured 22 when a Sydney-bound coach collided with a semi-trailer. In 1960 Australian rock legend Johnny O'Keefe lost control of his Plymouth Belvedere sedan on a bend on the same stretch of highway at Clybucca, severely injuring himself, his wife and manager.

These later tragedies led to renewed calls to complete the construction of a four lane divided highway from Sydney to Brisbane as a matter of urgency. Now 27 years later another 28 kilometres of four lane divided highway was recently completed, by-passing the December crash site. Completion of the remaining upgrading is expected by 2020.)

The recent official opening of the Frederickton to



Eungai upgrade (Clybucca Bypass) took me back 85 years to 1930 when as a six year old I began riding my pushbike from our dairy farm four kilometres to the one-teacher Clybucca Public School. The so-called 'Pacific Highway' was then an unsealed, narrow, pot-holed, corrugated track, dusty in summer and muddy in winter. I rode past the farms of our neighbours the Fords, the Sullivan home farm, Humpty-back bridge turn-off to South West Rocks, the Riddel farm on the corner where later Johnny O'Keefe came to grief, the Knauer farm and finally crossed Clybucca Creek bridge before the tiring uphill pedal to the school. Despite the worst weather the north coast could throw at me, the occasional 'buster' and gravel-rash, I rarely missed a day's school. Most of the kids walked to

school bare-foot across paddocks, avoiding the gravel road. A few rode horses bareback, the four Henry children two up on Squib and Paddy. They left them in the school's horse paddock before riding home in time to help with the afternoon milking.

In 1936 I began secondary education at Kempsey High School and for the next five years, rode five kilometres in the opposite direction, past the site where 50 years later the coach smash tragedy occurred. I timed my departure from home by the sound of the Nestle Factory siren in Smithtown. Passing by the McCarthy, Henry, Raymond, Johnstone, Plummer and Saul farms, I left my bike in Mr John Saul's garage, beside his Buick Straight Eight sedan, and caught the 8.30 am Smithtown school bus to Kempsey. When it was wet I pedalled bare-footed with my sox, shoes and a towel in my school port on the rack to dry my feet. I hated riding into the howling nor' easterlies in summer, the freezing westerlies in winter and the careless drivers who splashed muddy water over me or left clouds of choking dust, but I never missed that bus.

I believe that my grandfather in the late 1800's converted the original bridle path from Seven Oakes through Clybucca and beyond into a track suitable for wheeled vehicles. His son, my father, photographed the impassable state of the road after floods in the 1920's and 30's. His photos were printed in the Sydney Morning Herald.

In the 1930's that section was maintained by two local men, Mr Herbie Hughes using a horse-drawn grader while Mr Mick Swan rode a bike and filled potholes and cleared drains with a pick and shovel. During the Great Depression "swaggies", (swagmen) humping their blueys, were a familiar sight as they walked the long paddock in search of work or cadged a feed in return for chopping firewood. Some camped overnight in roadside cream stands or under bridges which offered scant shelter. Our parents insisted we give them a wide berth and not to talk to them, harmless though most were. We knew all the local indigenous families who drove between their camps in their sulkies and always bade them 'Good-day'.

There were few cars to worry us, most of them local. We knew all the makes and who the owners were. There were a few regular commuters such as the mail man, cream lorries and the log lorries on the way to Jamieson's sawmill in Frederickton. On Sunday mornings our teacher with his wife and family in his bull-nose Morris roadster drove past on their way to Mass in Smithtown, a contrast to Mr John Croad in his horse and buggy. Every Saturday evening Hartley's bus from Stuarts Point took a load of picture-goers to the flicks at the Mayfair Theatre in Kempsey. How we wished we were among them!

Long distance travellers were rare, easily recognised because they often drove with their headlights on during the day (to stop the battery from being over-charged my mechanically-minded Uncle Alf told me). Another giveaway sign was the luggage rack at the back piled high with ports, the running boards packed with camping gear and spare cans of benzene, while a canvas waterbag dangled from the front bumper bar. We waved to the Pioneer Tours coach on its monthly run between Sydney and Brisbane, wondering how people could afford such a luxurious form of travel, which brings me up to the present. The 1989 Clybucca interstate coach disaster happened outside the home of one of our former school mates Dorothy Hughes at whose wedding to Mr Reg Kelly my sister had been bridesmaid. Reg had at one time worked on the Sullivan farms as a 'hired man' (One pound a week plus meals and a bed). They were among the first on the scene.

Now after almost 100 years the Pacific Highway, Highway One, now Macleay Valley Way has reverted to local traffic; it will be like old times. I have never been to Colombatti and often wondered as a boy what lay beyond the Clybucca swamps to the west of our farm. To drive along the bypass is on my bucket list but somehow it won't be the same, passing in mere minutes through all that featureless country. Just another boring four lane, but much safer, stretch of highway.

**Les Sullivan,
May 2016**

MAIL COACH ACCIDENT

Dr Casement succumbs to Injuries

Macleay Argus 25 February 1910

On Tuesday last a serious accident happened to the coach which runs between Comara and Armidale in continuation of the Kempsey-Comara service. There is a through line of coaches from Kempsey to Armidale once a week, and the coach from Kempsey to Comara to connect with the New England service leaves West Kempsey every Monday morning at 6.30. Last Monday Dr Casement was a through passenger as also was Mr Edward Secomb, Mr Albert Kemp and Mrs Chas. Bowen and Miss Lena Bowen, a daughter of Mrs C Bowen. Mr Bannerman was picked up at Skillion Flat, and he was also booked for Armidale. It may be stated that Mr Tom Freeman of Kempsey, has the contract from Kempsey to Comara, and from thence to Armidale the mail is run by Mr A J Davis. He has Mr Ben Swan engaged as driver and a more careful whip cannot be found along the local mail route. On Tuesday the coach was within two or three miles of Wollomombi, near a place called Chandler's Creek where it is the custom to place a bag in a receptacle at the side of the road. According to what we can learn the driver pulled the horses up and he was in the act of leaning over the dashboard to put the mail bag out when the horses in the pole commenced to move. One of the leaders was very flighty and on the swingle-bars touching its legs the animal bolted. The driver lurched forward and Dr Casement, who was on the back seat, endeavoured to save the driver, but both were pitched out. The doctor was thrown out of the coach and evidently struck the wheel and fell on his head. Mr A Kemp seized the reins and turned the leaders into the fence and thus saved the coach from capsizing.

With the exception of Dr Casement the occupants of the vehicle escaped with slight injuries and were able to proceed on their journey. We much regret to state that the "old doctor", as he is affectionately termed by many residents in this district, was very seriously injured. Medical aid was summoned, and Dr MacInnes, of Kempsey (who was accompanied by Mrs Casement) proceeded at once by motor car to the scene of the disaster. Dr MacInnes discovered that the injuries to Dr



*Kempsey-Armidale Coach on Georges Creek Bridge
(MRHS)*

Casement were more serious than at first thought. Six ribs were broken puncturing the right lung, and the doctor's neck and head were severely hurt. Dr MacInnes summoned Dr Bell, of Hillgrove, and Dr Harris, of Armidale, and the latter medical gentlemen is still in attendance. On Thursday afternoon word was received that Dr Casement was in a critical condition and the worst is feared.

So critical was Dr Casement's condition that Mr Ray Casement and Miss Casement went up to Wollomombi in Mr A A Kemp's motor car on Wednesday.

Just as we were going to press we grieved to receive the news that Dr Casement succumbed to his injuries on Thursday evening. The body will be brought to Kempsey and the funeral will leave his residence at a time yet to be fixed on Saturday afternoon.

This was not the first time Dr Casement had been injured in a buggy accident. He was kicked by a horse in September 1887 suggesting that being a doctor and driving in a buggy or coach was a dangerous event. Almost every edition of the Argus had a news report of a buggy or coach accident. Some injuries were serious and for Dr Casement, were fatal.

Article sourced and annotated by Dr Noeline Kyle

Recent Additions to our Library

Bassett, Jan *Guns and Brooches: Australian Army Nursing*
Burr, Derek Lawrence *Family Kempsey*
Kyle, Dr Noeline *A Greater Guilt: Constance Emilie Kent and the Road Murder*
Lightfoot, Daryl M *A Cow and a Haypress* (Gill family)
Lindsay, Oliver *The Battle for Hong Kong 1941-1945*
Pascoe, Bruce *Dark Emu*
Russell, Dr Roslyn *High Seas and High Teas: Voyaging to Australia*
Serventy, Vincent and Raymond, Robert *Lakes and Rivers in Australia*
Steggall, Dr Stephany Evans *Interestingly Enough...The Life of Tom Keneally*
Thomas, John N *In Search of Uncle Billy* (L/Cpl William Debenham Wheeldon)

Benefits of Membership

Membership Applications and Renewals start from January 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)

Our Affiliations

Australasian Federation of Family History Organisations
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 Presidents
Garry Munday
Tom Plunkett

Secretary & Public Officer
Ruth Woodward

Treasurer
Barbara Coughran

Patrons
Terry Eakin
Geraldine Yabsley
Ald. Liz Campbell

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Phone: (02) 6562 7572
Email: mrhs5@bigpond.com
Website: www.kempseymuseum.org

Membership
\$20 pick up journal
\$25 including journal postage
\$30 large envelope

General 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