

NEWSLETTER

No. 3 June 2018

of

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC (Founded 11th June 1958)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society

ABN 34611778680

PO Box 450 Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Editor Lionel Ahearn

Our Society turns 60



Members of the public at Society's Room on Saturday, 9th June, 2018

To celebrate sixty years of operation a morning tea was held on Saturday 9th June and members of the public were invited to visit to view the Society in operation and to use the facilities for research. They were also invited to join us for morning tea provided by the members.



Society Members at the Railway Hotel ready to sit down for 60th Anniversary Dinner

A Short History

On 11th June 2018 the Muswellbrook Shire Local & Family History Society Inc. celebrated sixty years of operation. The first meeting was called on 11th June 1958 at 8.00pm in the Rotary Room at the back of the old library to consider the formation of a Historical Society. With Alderman R Cousins presiding, a large number of people attended. After discussion and questions it was moved by Father M J Fitzgerald and seconded by K W D Humphries that a society called Muswellbrook and Upper Hunter Historical Society be formed. This was carried unanimously. The President was Captain D W Macintyre with three Vice Presidents.

On 8th November 1960 a letter was received from Muswellbrook Municipal Council offering free use of a room above the Rotary Room providing the Society renovated and painted it at their expense. The first meeting was held in the new room on 25th May.

DETAILS ABOUT THE SOCIETY

Objectives:

- To collect, preserve and promote the social, cultural and physical history of Muswellbrook Shire, its environs and its people for future generations.
- to promote public access to our collections and research facilities, and
- to provide information, advice and assistance to individuals, community groups, organizations and businesses.

Meetings

The Society meets on the third Tuesday of each month starting at 7.30 in the Function Room, Muswellbrook Library, come to the rear of the building. All members and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting and stay for a cuppa, biscuit & a chat after.

Premises

The Society maintains its records in a section of Muswellbrook Library. You will find us at the rear of the Library. The Research Centre is open every Saturday from 9.30am to 1.00pm. The Research Centre may be opened at other times by appointment. Bus & tour groups are most welcome.

Annual Fees

Single \$25 Double \$35 Pensioner Single \$15 Pensioner Double \$25

The Hon Secretary may be contacted via the post office box or email mei2@bigpond.com The Society also has a web presence thanks to Darrin Khan and Lionel Ahearn at <http://www.mbkhistorical.org> and a research site at <http://research.mbkhistorical.org>

The Society passed through a period of limited activity with the Society going into recess for twelve months in 1970. From 1971 meetings were held every three months for a period.

In February 1986 the Muswellbrook Council advised of their intention to allow the Society to use Weidmann Cottage provided that the Society had the resources and finance to offset running costs. Weidmann Cottage was to be opened on 20th August 1988. A house warming was held on 3rd December 1988 with Tony McTaggart conducting a re-enactment of the selling of the first blocks of land. Liz Parkinson gave a talk on Muswellbrook. It appears the Society took up occupancy during "Back to Muswellbrook" Celebrations during August 1988.

The name of the Society underwent minor name changes and at the present moment it is the Muswellbrook Shire Local & Family History Society Inc. The two ground floor rooms of Weidmann Cottage were used as a small museum while the two upstairs rooms housed the Society's records and were used for research. The exceedingly steep stairs led to difficulties for senior members. Also the building had some interesting quirks. For example the lights at the front door had to be turned on before the upstairs power points would work.

The Society remained in Weidmann Cottage until 24th November 2012 when it moved into the newly renovated room at the back of the library.

More on Muswellbrook Newspapers – Part 2

From Cub Reporter



The Muswellbrook Chronicle commenced on 27 July 1888. It was published and printed by William Tipper of Maitland and Pierce Healy of Muswellbrook.

Thus Muswellbrook had two newspapers; the *Chronicle* and the *Times*.

Pierce Healy, who was an experienced journalist, had been the correspondent of the *Maitland Mercury* for many years prior to operating the *Chronicle*.

A special edition of the *Chronicle* in its enlarged form, printed on satin-faced Cambic¹ may be obtained at the Office Bridge Street. Price 2s 6d. The office was located in a building owned by Mrs Hegarty. The building was located in Bridge Street near the former picture theatre.

The *Chronicle* was advertised for sale in *The Sydney Morning Herald* on 17 February 1894. The paper was purchased by Arthur H Gribble and Thomas Rixon.

Only six months after acquiring the paper, the new owners Gribble and Rixon suffered a huge setback when, along with several other Muswellbrook businesses, their business premises were destroyed by a large fire.

Large Fire at Muswellbrook was the headline of a story in the *Mercury* on Saturday 8 September, 1894; '*The total destruction of property is estimated at £1000. The buildings were insured for £400. The heaviest losers are Mr Davison, saddler, and Messrs. Gribble and Rixon, proprietors of the Chronicle, who were not insured.*'

After the fire it appears that the *Chronicle* office moved to temporary offices in Market Street near the Railway Hotel.

New premises were constructed at 18 Sydney Street shortly after.

The office was not located there for a long time. The rate book records that in 1897 Reference 13 in Bridge Street Geo F Rixon occupied a 'house and printing office'. This was to be the location of the *Chronicle* for the next thirty one years.

¹ Fine linen cloth

Gribble left the *Chronicle* prior to the end of 1896. Thomas H Rixon (Gribble's partner) was a brother of George F Rixon.

George Rixon purchased the *Chronicle* in December 1896. Shortly after he purchased the business, he moved to Bridge Street in 1897 from the Sydney Street address where he had conducted the Muswellbrook Times.

In the 1890s the *Chronicle* published twice a week. There was an interruption to this schedule in June 1917 when *'owing to the great scarcity of paper and an increase in prices' the Chronicle was published once a week only, on Saturdays.* Commencing 9 April 1919 the *Chronicle* reverted to being published twice a week.

Rixon owned the *Chronicle* until 30 June 1921 when he sold to R E McClintock and T E Whitton for £2137. R E McClintock purchased the *Chronicle* in partnership with his brother-in-law, T E Whitton.

In March 1928 it was announced the *Chronicle* would be moving to new premises to be constructed further north in Bridge Street, next to the Masonic Hall. The building was described, *'The plans provide for a brick structure. Ample provision is made for obtaining the most from natural light, which is so essential in a printing office. The style of the building will please, and will be one of the most attractive of any of the principal buildings in Muswellbrook.'*

For 32 years the office was next to the 'G S (Government Savings) Bank' Reference is made to the location in an article on The Australia Café' published in the *Chronicle* on 26th September, 1930;

'For these reasons this paper joins with many people in offering congratulations to the Misses Wilkins, who have, at considerable expense, caused the old building which housed the "Chronicle" for over a quarter of a century to be transformed to a place of beauty.'

Mrs A Arnott opened a new branch shop of Arnott's Railway Bakery in the new *Chronicle* building on 3 September 1928. It is not known how long they occupied the shop but in October 1935 Mrs Arnott had opened 'modern new shop' across the road in Bridge Street near Rennie's garage.

Ill health forced Mr Whitton to retire from newspapers in 1935

McClintock continued in business until 29 June 1951 when it was announced *'Upper Hunter Newspapers succeeds McClintock and Whitton. As from Monday the newspapers and printing businesses will be taken over by Upper Hunter Newspapers Pty Ltd., the shareholders of which consist wholly of the members of the McClintock family.'*

The new firm name was chosen because of the coverage given by our newspapers in certain sections of the famous Upper Hunter Valley.... The date of inception of Upper Hunter Newspaper Pty Ltd, 1 July 1951 marks the 30th anniversary of the first publication of the 'Chronicle' under the name of McClintock and Whitton'

New Members

The Society is pleased to welcome three new members. They are:-

Virginia Jackson, Scott Pagan, Kerry Davies

We wish them a long and happy association with our Society.

An ongoing study

On the 3rd July Muswellbrook Historical Society will be opening its doors to social historian Rebecca Bowman and her award winning photographer, Amanda Gaffney Ray for her study "Reminisces of a Precious Gown." Rebecca is undertaking a major historical study of women and their precious wedding gowns who wore or now treasure their own or a family members wedding gown in the Upper Hunter Region.

To date more than 130 gowns have been photographed for inclusion in this study. Rebecca is then taking down the story of the bride who wore the gown, or that of a family member, or research only, to capture the significance of the gown to the woman who wore it.

Rebecca continues to seek gowns for her study, though they must be at least 40years old.

In the next newsletter there will be a sneak preview of two of the gowns treasured by the historical society as photographed by Amanda Ray Images.

A Correction & Some More Information

In the last Newsletter, No. 2 – 2018, I wrote on our visit to the Newcastle and District Historical Society Inc. Some of my information about the Society was not correct. Robyn Single, their Secretary has been kind enough to write giving us some more detail. She writes:-

Just a correction as to the original name of our Lambton Premises, and a little of where the Society had its permanent 'Home' years ago.

The Theatre where we meet now, was the 'Savoy Theatre', and the event leading to us now having no permanent home was the horrible 'Earthquake of 1989'.

The building where our Society met for many years was called 'Shortland Clinic' or 'The Round House', in Watt Street Newcastle, and the premises were 'Rent Free'. Shortland Clinic was mainly used for treatment of 'Mental Patients', but being extensively damaged in the earthquake, it had to be demolished, with mental Patients now visiting or being housed in another older building on the 'Site' known as 'James Fletcher Hospital'.

With the demolition of this 'Round House', the Society then had no permanent home, with records and memorabilia, spread among Society Members, and all important papers sent to the Newcastle University Archives.

Since this terrible turn of events, Newcastle Historical Society Meetings have been held in quite a few different places, due to increases in rent, which prevents us having any 'Permanent Storage'.

The Muswellbrook Shire Local & Family History Society Inc can be thankful for the premises we rent from the Muswellbrook Shire Council. It provides us with a secure base and the opportunity to use the Library facilities for special functions when required. Even in this age of the internet, Historical Societies play an important role in preserving information for the future.

Three more cemeteries

Recently Garry Meissner and I were fortunate enough to be taken to two small cemeteries by Ron Connelly so that we were able to photograph them. The first was the Macintyre Family Cemetery and the second was the Redrock Cemetery which is the Hall Family Cemetery. At a later date we were able to photograph the Bengalla Cemetery which contains the graves of the Keys Family. A book containing the inscriptions from each headstone together with photographs of each grave as well as a close up shot of the inscription is in the process of development.

Further information will be provided in the near future on when it is available for sale. Below are some photos of the three sites.



Macintyre Family Cemetery



Redrock Cemetery



Bengalla Cemetery