

NEWSLETTER No.6 November 2017

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

BEERSHEBA MEMORIAL



The dedication of the statue in Brook Street on Tuesday, 31 October 2017, commemorating the 100th Anniversary of the attack on Beersheba, continues the fine tradition of the people of Muswellbrook Shire in recognizing those who served to protect our country and our way of life. The statue 'Over The Top' honours the legend of the mighty Walers and the brave men who rode them was sculptured by Brett Garling.

The charge of the 4th Australian Light Horse at Beersheba late in the afternoon of 31 October 1917, is remembered as the last great cavalry charge. With time running out for the Australians to capture Beersheba and its wells before dark, Lieutenant General Harry Chauvel, the Australian commander of the Desert Mounted Corps, ordered Brigadier General William Grant, commanding the 4th Light Horse Brigade, to make a mounted attack directly towards the town.¹ The attack was made with the 4th Light Horse Regiment on the right, the 12th Light Horse Regiment on the left and the 11th Light Horse Regiment in reserve².

Lieutenant-Colonel Donald Cameron DSO and Bar was the Commanding Officer 12th Light Horse Regiment came from Rouchel, NSW.



Light Horsemen in uniform on Waler horses ²

'Over The Top' statue, Brook Street Photo courtesy Lionel Ahearn

The Waler horses, so prized for their endurance and speed, have a close connection with the district. The Piercfield property was the assembly point for horses from the district and areas from north western NSW. The name 'Waler' is believed to have originally been given to remounts supplied to the Indian Army because they were supplied from New South Wales.

The name was adopted and given to all horses sent overseas and especially to those supplied to the Australian Light Horse servicemen.

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 7.00 in the Society's Room at the rear of the Library 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 (There is a one off joining fee of \$5)

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>

¹ <http://www.awmlondon.gov.au/battles/beersheba>

² From History of the Waler – Waler Horse Society of Australia. www.walerhorse.com

WAR MEMORIAL QUEEN SQUARE

After World War I the citizens of Muswellbrook undertook to erect a suitable memorial to those who served in what was supposed to be the war to end all wars.

Over 1000 people were present at the ceremony of unveiling the soldiers Memorial at Muswellbrook on Anzac Day (Wednesday, April 25, 1923). The ceremony was carried out in a most impressive manner, and the beautiful monument seemed, to bespeak the solemnity of the occasion. The memorial is considered to be one of the finest of its kind erected in the Commonwealth.³



Unveiling soldiers memorial Anzac Day 1923 – cropped from MSL&FHS Inc photo 1095.2

MUSWELLBROOK MEMORIAL GROVE – VIETNAM WAR MEMORIAL



⁵ Vietnam Memorial – New England Highway – Muswellbrook

The Memorial Grove to the north of Muswellbrook between the New England Highway and the railway line. The signs indicate the number killed in each unit. ⁶

Four monuments along one kilometre of the New England Highway commemorate the veterans of World War II, National Service, the Korean and Vietnam Wars and the Malayan and Borneo conflicts.

The monument in the photo commemorates those who served in the Vietnam War. The names inscribed on the black granite walls also include the New Zealanders who fell during the war. The memorial has been constructed to resemble a gun pit and its proportions are similar to those that existed in Vietnam. Construction of the memorial was undertaken by the Muswellbrook RSL Sub-Branch.⁴

The memorial was dedicated on Saturday 6 December 2008 by Her Excellency Professor Marie Bashir AC, CVO, Governor of NSW.



³ Muswellbrook Chronicle Friday 27 April 1923

⁴ Information from Web site www.monumentaustralia.org.au

⁵ Photo courtesy of Lionel Ahearn

⁶ MSL&FHS Inc photo D0414

DENMAN WAR MEMORIAL



The Denman War Memorial situated in Remembrance Park, Paxton Street Denman is another monument of which the Shire can be proud. The front is inscribed 'In memory of those from Denman and District who gave their lives for their country. We will remember them.' It contains the names from WWI 1914-1918, WWII 1939-1945 and the Vietnam War. The back is inscribed, 'To honour those men from the Denman District who served their country.' It contains the names from WWII, Korea, Vietnam.

The monument was unveiled by G. E. Priest - NSW State President, R.S.L. of Australia on 20 February 1994.

War Trophy Guns



After World War I there was a distribution of War Trophies. Muswellbrook received a Trench Mortar captured at Frammerale on the Western Front, by the 5th Brigade of the Second Australian Division of the A.I.F in France.

The dedication of the Trench Mortar took place on Monday 25th April 1921 at the Court House.

An additional War Trophy, a 7.7 M.M. Gun No. 994 33rd Btn was allocated to Muswellbrook. There followed much discussion of where it should be placed. After a time at the gas works it was repaired. It was placed on the Town Hall Reserve. In 1932 they were moved to

inside the gates at Gerald Park. They also spent some time in front of the court house in Bridge Street. In 1964 the Council arranged for them to be moved to the grounds of the RSL Club. After Club renovations in 1983 they were placed in front of the RSL Club, fronting Bridge Street. They were moved once again to the north of the Vietnam Memorial Grove on the New England Highway.⁷

Hopefully this latest move may result in a permanent home for them. The latest addition to the Vietnam Memorial is a 105mm M2A2 Howitzer brought into service in January 1972 and purchased by Muswellbrook RSL Sub Branch in February 2013. It is situated on a circular cement base just to the south of the rest area.⁸



⁷ Information from 'History of War Trophies displayed at Muswellbrook RSL Club' Margaret Dolahenty 2003

⁸ Information from Craig Ross, President Muswellbrook RSL Sub Branch

PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2016/2017

My first year as President has been a busy one and hopefully has continued the great work of Helen Ellis our previous president. The Society has continued to gain members and we now have in excess of 45 members.

Our financial position remains strong with a profit of more than \$4000 from Society activities such as research, sale of books, sale of photos, etc. Our investments continue to build with over \$3000 in interest being earned this year.

However, none of this was possible without the hard work of the dedicated members who give freely of their time and energy throughout the year. I would like to thank these not only on my behalf but also on your behalf. First and foremost is our Secretary, Heather Meissner, who sends countless hours in attending to the constant stream of emails, letters and phone calls. Also Garry Meissner who has worked tirelessly on the numerous activities that we often take for granted, such as the opening and closing of the Society Rooms, the purchase of supplies, setting up for meetings, etc.

I would also like to thank Rob Tickle for his numerous rolls in the Society. While he has moved away to Beechwood and has relinquished his positions I am sure he will continue to provide assistance when required. I did write to Rob, formally thanking him on behalf of the Society. To fulfil these rolls will not be easy and will require discussion and most likely a change in how things are done to continue to provide the service we have in the past. Personally, I feel that a number of people are required or in some cases a committee. More on this when we come to fill these positions.

To our Treasurer, Mal Rothe, my thanks on behalf of the Society, for keeping us in the black. Also thanks to those who are rostered on each Saturday and keep the doors open. To Glenda Murray for her wonderful displays in the library which have consumed much of her time and to Terry Gill who has agreed to take on this roll.

The Society is very fortunate in that we have members who are engaged in the writing of books. Last September for History Week the St Heliers Convict Register was launched due to the hard work of Rob Tickle. The day, with the help of the Library, was a huge success. Again the members responded in their usual fashion with an excellent morning tea and BBQ. While not officially launched by the Society, the Campbells Corner Book would not have been possible without the Society and in particular Bill Spicer's endless hours of work. This year we at last received the final publication and permission to print more copies if required.

One of the many highlights of the year was the Society's Heritage Week visit to Balmoral Homestead. There was a huge turnout of members and visitors and the feeling I received was that the Society should consider future visits and trips of this type.

Please forgive me if I have forgotten anyone or anything. In the future I think that we should explore new avenues to bring the Society more to the attention of the public. With almost everyone having a digital appliance constantly at hand perhaps this may be a way to attract some new young members. While I have been able to initiate two web sites I have not had the time to keep them constantly up to date. Again, an opportunity for a young person with an interest in technology to become involved.

Preparations for our Open Day and Book Launch on 9th September 2017 are progressing and will involve the launch of two books by Bruce James. I am sure the Society will again give their support to this function.

Once again thank you to everyone for your assistance. It has been greatly appreciated.

Lionel Ahearn President 2016/17

2017/2018

Election of New Officers:

President: - Lionel Ahearn

Vice President: - Helen Ellis

Secretary: - Heather Meissner

Treasurer: - Mal Rothe

Public Officer: - Mal Rothe.

Publicity Officer: - Helen Ellis

Research Committee Coordinator: - Garry Meissner

Assistant Researchers: - Eve Ellis, Mal Rothe, Garry Meissner, Margaret Dolahenty, Ted George & Rob Tickle on Pre 1900 research..

Heritage Officer Coordinator: - Garry Meissner with Rob Tickle as consultant

Newsletter Editor: - Lionel Ahearn.

Committee Members: Garry Meissner, Eve Ellis, Glenda Murray, Ted George & Rob Tickle.

Editor of Publications that are published by the Society. Rob Tickle
