

NEWSLETTER

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

No. 3 June 2020

Covid - 19

Due to the restrictions imposed because of the pandemic the Society has remained closed for the month of June. Thanks to Heather and Garry some research enquiries have been dealt with. Some work has been accomplished during the month with a few members practising Social Distancing. Due to the closure of the Chronicle Office in Market Lane the Society was donated a ute load of bound copies of the last few years of the Muswellbrook Chronicle, The Hunter Valley News and a limited number of The Scone Advocate. These have been filed in the Stack Area.

I'm sure we are all hoping that this is not the end of the publication of the local papers in the Upper Hunter. The papers have and continue to be an excellent source of historical information.

A decision will be made at the end of the month as what will happen in July.

Vale Henry Walter Yonge (Harry)

The members of the Society were saddened by the passing on 26 May 2020 of our long term member Harry. With Jeanette he attended many of the Society's functions and outings.

Besides his devotion to his family, especially his grandchildren, Harry was noted for his unfailing interest in two fields.



After completing National Service Training in 1953 he continued his interest in the army and joined the local Nashos in 2000 and helped raise thousands of dollars for charity. In 2017 Harry was made a patron of the RSL Sub Branch and in 2018 he was made a life member of the National Service Association. Harry also had a special bond with St Alban's Church where he maintained the church clock for over 50 years. (Surely a record).

Due to restrictions only a few members were able to attend the service at St Albans but we would all like to extend our deepest sympathy to Jeanette and the family.



Jeanette & Harry at the 50th Anniversary Dinner of the Society



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 Room at the rear of the Muswellbrook Library. 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>

Get Well It is pleasing to hear that Col Ellis is home from hospital and we wish him all the best for the future.

Lighting Muswellbrook

The following is a brief history of the development of street lighting in Muswellbrook. Most of this article relies very heavily on a piece written by Bill Spicer entitled 'Gas Street Lamps'. Without his diligent research and permission I would not have been able to put this segment together.

The lighting of the municipality was begun over thirty years ago when kerosene lamps were used in the street, served the purpose intended, and were duly appreciated for six or seven years.¹

Domestic Lighting

This would mean that the streets were illuminated beginning somewhere around the mid 1880s.



Most houses would also have been lit by kerosene lamps. The lamp would often sit in the middle of the table. Later lamps employed a fragile mantle which increased the brightness of the light considerably. Great care had to be taken not to bump the lamp as this could cause the mantle to collapse. I can still remember sitting at the kitchen table reading by a kerosene lamp when the electricity failed.



Mantle as displayed on Bunnings web site

Lamps on display at Society room behind library. Bill Spicer photo

To move around the house or to go outside at night a hurricane lamp was often employed. My father told us of running his line of rabbit traps two or three times a night using only a hurricane lamp.

Muswellbrook Municipal Council established the gas works in 1894.



A newspaper account of the opening reveals:

The official opening of the gas works took place Monday night before a very large and representative gathering at the intersection of Bridge and William Streets. At the opening held on 24 December 1894, Miss Clendinning, daughter of the Mayor, lit the first light.²

Photo 565.3

With the manufacture of gas came the means for greatly improving the streets and footpaths by the application of tar. This has been extensively carried out, so that residents generally have the advantages of good walking ground to their homes and business places.



Photo D2647



Lamplighters

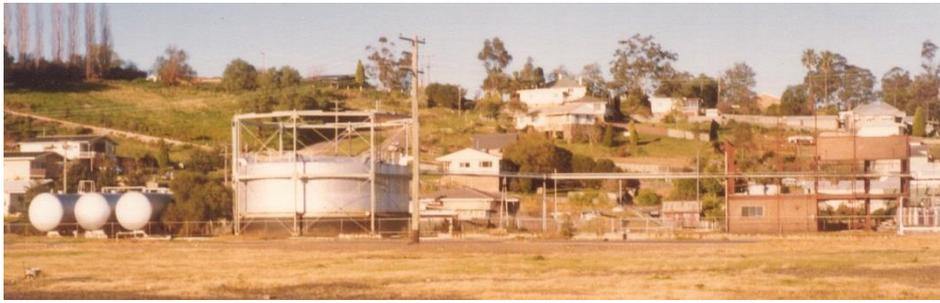
'On the northern side of Foley Street, the town gas works opened in 1894, and managed by George Ellis, with Bill Gale assistant. One of this pair lit the streets up at sundown and turned the light off about sunrise. Many of the lights were extinguished at 11 p.m. The mode of travel was by push bike and at times horse and sulky.'³

The Gas Works as seen in a photo taken from Dolahenty Street. Cropped from Council Photo 003. Possibly taken around 1960

¹ *The Muswellbrook Chronicle* on Saturday 8 January 1921

² *Maitland Daily Mercury*. Friday 19 October 1894, Page 4

³ *The Muswellbrook Chronicle* 22 January 1963, from Article written by M H Bridge



The Gas Works taken from Carl Street on 26 July 1978.

Council photo 1547

Retort House at the Gas Works for the making of coke. Tar was a by-product which was used to pave the streets. (See above)



The Retort House at Muswellbrook Gas Works Council Photo 0130



Photo taken between 1904 and 1910 Society photo 1088.2

The positioning of street lights was considered again by Council in July 1902, when the Gas Committee reported 'We are of the opinion that if the lights were placed on the sides of the streets it would be necessary to erect eight extra street lamps, as the trees on the footpath would intercept the lights and make the extra lamps necessary.'

This photo clearly shows the tree guards surrounding the trees referred to in the above Gas Committee report to Council.



Older style of lamp and post

Society photo 2388.2

The original gas lamps, (see lamp on right of photo) were replaced by more efficient lamps around 1913 which had a thinner base and longer lamp.



Newer lamp and pole Society photo 2435

Fortunately examples of the gas poles are still evident as can be seen in the photos below.

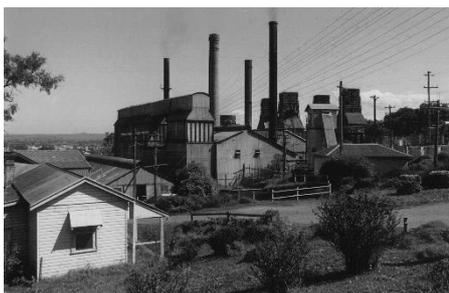


Early lamp base. Society photo D2910



1913 lamp base in roundabout corner of Bridge & William Streets Society photo D2372

It was reported on Friday, 18 November 1921 that if all gas lamps were replaced with electric lights there was a need for 99 lamps. The replacement of the gas street lamps with electric street lights began in 1923.



Muswellbrook Coal Company Power Station Society Photo 1900

The Power Station stood next to the Muswellbrook underground coal mine.

Note Queen St extended to Victoria Street.



Aerial view of Power Station

Society Photo 2559

The Coal Company in 1917-18 commenced to generate electricity for its own use in the underground mine. In 1919 the local Chamber of Commerce interviewed the Municipal Council on the question of lighting a portion of the town with electricity.⁴

'Electric light brightens our street. A large crowd witnessed the ceremony (light was switched on) at the sub-station. The site was almost as bright as day when the light was switched-on by Mrs Parkinson.'⁵



Society Photo 458.1

The Muswellbrook Shire continues to be the home of power stations. The Power Station built by NSW Electricity Commission off Sandy Creek Road was opened by Premier, Hon. R J Heffron in July 1960.



Liddell Power Station was commissioned in 1971 and Bayswater Power Station was commissioned in 1985.

Society photo 0016.1



During the triennium ending 1977 a total of 50% of Muswellbrook was serviced by an underground electricity service. Underground installation in the business centre was well advanced. Improved lighting was installed in Bridge and Sydney Streets.

⁴ *Muswellbrook Coal Company – The first 90 years*, by John McDonald, p 19

⁵ *Muswellbrook Chronicle*, Tuesday 18 September 1923