

# NEWSLETTER

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC (Founded 11<sup>th</sup> June 1958)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society

ABN 34611778680

PO Box 450 Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Editor Lionel Ahearn

No. 6 December 2019

## Life in the Upper Hunter ..... Mac Bridge Remembers

The above book was launched at the Muswellbrook Library Seminary Rooms on 23<sup>rd</sup> November at 2.00pm. This was the result of over twelve months of solid work from when Rosemary Logue interpreted and typed up over forty one hand-written writing pads that had been donated to the Society. With over sixty people in attendance this was probably our most successful launch. Margaret Ashford-MacDougal, Mac Bridge's granddaughter and editor, introduced the book and spoke of Mac's life and how his memories came to be written down.



Margaret Ashford introducing the book



Geoff Harrison launching the book

We were fortunate to have Geoff Harrison, a former resident of Rouchel, address the audience on his long association with the area and the many places mentioned in Mac Bridge's memories.

He then did the Society the honour of launching the Society's latest edition. So far almost one hundred have been purchased and I feel the book could make an excellent Christmas present. Once again a big thank you to all the members who provided the excellent afternoon tea.

## Christmas Dinner

Almost thirty members enjoyed getting together at the Muswellbrook Workers Club to partake in an enjoyable dinner to celebrate Christmas and the end of another successful year.



Members enjoying our Christmas Dinner

Jeff Wolfgang had the members guessing on another of his interesting finds. It contains a wad of cotton wool and members guessed it was perhaps for smelling salts, perfume or snuff. If you have any information please let our Secretary know so she can pass it on to Jeff.



Jeff's latest curiosity

## 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

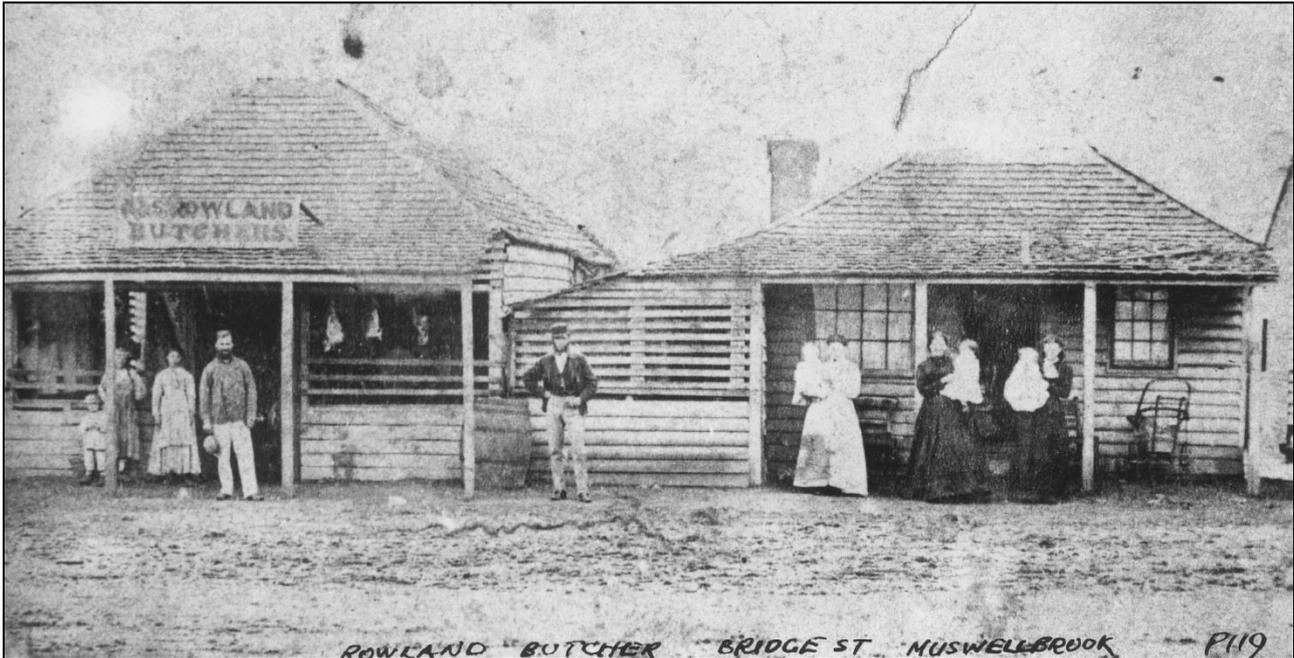
Single \$25 Double \$35 Pensioner Single \$15 Pensioner Double \$25

The Hon Secretary may be contacted via the post office box or email [mei2@bigpond.com](mailto: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>

## An Interesting Society Photo

A short time ago I sent Rob Tickle a copy of the following photo. This photo had always intrigued me as one of the earliest in our collection. He sent me the following in depth research item which I have included below.

### HODGES & ROWLAND: BUTCHERS



This is a story involving William Hodges and Edward, James, Richard and Samuel Rowland (most likely brothers), covering the area from Camberwell to Murrurundi over about a ten year period. The above photograph is part of the story and provides a glimpse into a very early part of Muswellbrook's history.

There were a number of partnerships between the persons mentioned above which make it very difficult to determine who owned what. In 1863, William Hodges was operating as a butcher at Camberwell, the *Maitland Mercury* indicated that he had lost eight head of cattle<sup>1</sup> and in January 1864, he was granted a slaughtering license.<sup>2</sup> In the same year, the *Maitland Mercury* notified readers that Hodges & Rowland of Camberwell were offering a reward for missing cattle.<sup>3</sup> The partner may have been James Rowland. The partnership continued until at least 1866.

On 12 July 1864, James Rowland and Jane Ledger were married by James Glennie in the Parish of Black Creek. He stated he was aged 23 years, butcher who had been born in London, England. She was 20, born Branxton, NSW.<sup>4</sup>

In 1866, William Hodges and James Rowland purchased Allotments 1 & 2, Section 1 in Bridge Street Muswellbrook from Mary Ann Bellow; they paid £1000 for the site, which included the inn on Allotment One.<sup>5</sup> The following year they (as tenants in common) took out a mortgage for £300 with Elijah Hart of West Maitland.<sup>6</sup> The mortgage was to be discharged by 1 April 1870 and was earning 10%pa for Hart. The same year the license of the Rose Inn was transferred from Timothy Ryan to James Rowland.<sup>7</sup> It would appear that William Hodges and James Rowland had started a butchering business in Muswellbrook around the time they purchased the Rose Inn for on 20 December 1866 the *Maitland Mercury* carried a notice that they were dissolving the business at Camberwell. The butchering business possibly conducted in the premises next to the Rose Inn, but other evidence indicates it was further up the street.<sup>8</sup> It is possible that James took in his brother as a partner in the business at this time.

<sup>1</sup> *Maitland Mercury* 28 May 1863

<sup>2</sup> *Maitland Mercury* 7 Jan 1864

<sup>3</sup> *Maitland Mercury* 30 Aug 1864

<sup>4</sup> C of E Parish Records

<sup>5</sup> LPI Bk 100 No. 640 5 Oct 1866

<sup>6</sup> LPI Bk 103 No. 55 1 April 1867

<sup>7</sup> *Maitland Mercury* 20 Nov 1866

<sup>8</sup> *Maitland Mercury* 20 December 1866

Working on the Sabbath was a problem in Muswellbrook, 1867:

**MUSWELLBROOK**  
**POLICE COURT, TUESDAY, JAN 15, 1867.—**  
**(Before E. White and F. W. Thrum, J.P.'s.)—**  
**James Rowland, charged with slaughtering a**  
**beast on the Sabbath, pleaded guilty, and was**  
**fined in the penalty of 5s. and court costs —**

*Maitland Mercury 19 Jan 1867*

This was followed a few months later with the following notice:

**NOTICE.**

**T**HE Public are hereby informed that we, the under-  
signed, Butchers in Muswellbrook, HAVE AGREED  
NOT TO SELL OR DELIVER MEAT on the SABBATH  
DAY, after the 10th day of June, 1867.

**MATTHIAS DONOHUE.**  
**RICHARD ROWLAND.**  
**DAVID STEWART.**  
**ABRAHAM CLARK.**

4156

*Maitland Mercury 11 June 1867*

At the same time, William Hodges was running a butchering business from the Chain of Ponds, he later appointed Edward Rowland of the Chain of Ponds to collect debts due.<sup>9</sup> William Hodges appears to have been following the railway construction with the opening of butchering businesses at Scone and Murrurundi. They operated as Hodges & Rowland, though in many cases it is not clear which Rowland was involved.

In 1869, the Muswellbrook butchering business between James and Richard Rowland was dissolved and Richard took on his brother, Samuel as partner.<sup>10</sup>

In 1870, James Rowland sold his moiety in the Rose Inn to William Hodges for £500. The mortgage taken out in 1867 was still outstanding.<sup>11</sup>

**M**ESSRS. R. & S. ROWLAND take this opportunity  
to return thanks to the people of Muswellbrook,  
and the public in general, for the very liberal patronage  
bestowed upon them for the last four years: they now  
hope by civility and attention, combined with a very  
great **REDUCTION IN THE PRICE OF MEAT**, to  
merit a continuance of the same.

**LIST OF PRICES:**

Rump Steaks .....	3½d.	Corn Pork .....	6d.
Roasting Beef .....	3d.	Pork chops .....	5d.
Corned Beef .....	3d.	Pork Sausages .....	7d.
Hind-quarter Beef..	2d.	Veal .....	5d.
Mutton Chops .....	3d.	Beef Sausages .....	4d.
Loins Mutton .....	3d.	Black Puddings .....	4d.
By whole or half		Spiced Beef .....	6d.
sheep .....	2½d.	Bacon .....	8d.
Roasting Pork .....	5d.		

**R. & S. ROWLAND,**  
Butchers,  
Bridge-street,  
Muswellbrook.

4762

*Maitland Mercury 17 July 1869*

It is interesting that the business had been in operation for four years and to observe the cuts of meat available.

<sup>9</sup> *Maitland Mercury 27 Sept 1866 & 20 December 1866*

<sup>10</sup> *Maitland Mercury 5 January 1869*

<sup>11</sup> LPI Bk 120 No. 964 27 August 1870

1870 James Rowland indicated he would stand for the first municipal elections to be held in Muswellbrook, he gained the same number of votes as T Fagan and the Returning Officer Cullen cast his vote in favour of Fagan hence Rowland did not have the honour of being an alderman.<sup>12</sup>

Hodges and Rowland opened a butcher's shop at Murrurundi in 1870. It is assumed that it was James as he was returning from Murrurundi when he met with a painful accident on 23 July 1872; this involved the amputation of a leg above the ankle. He survived the operation. By 1873, he was the landlord of the hotel at Blackville.<sup>13</sup>

Even though James Rowland and William Hodges had divided their main asset, the Rose Inn, they still had land dealings together. On 12 February 1874, they purchased Allot 3 Sec 1 from George Smith Hall for £175. Four months later Rowland sold his share to Hodges.<sup>14</sup>

Much more research could be carried out on the property dealings of Hodges and the Rowland Brothers; this article has concentrated on the Rose Inn and the butcher's shop in the photograph.

#### **WHERE WAS THE BUTCHERS SHOP AND WHEN WAS THE PHOTOGRAPH TAKEN?**

The Muswellbrook Municipal Rate Book for 1870 shows the buildings with owner and occupier between the Rose Inn (2019 Royal Hotel) and the Royal Hotel (2019 NAB Bank).

Occupier		Owner		Building
Rowland	James			Rose Inn
Rowland	Charles	Rowland	James	shop & dwelling
Clark	Alex	Rowland	James	shop & dwelling
Fagan & Carlton		Rowland	James	forge
Keating		Nowland	Harriet	saddlery
McAuley	Wm	Nowland	Harriet	cottage
<b>Rowland</b>	<b>R &amp; S</b>	<b>Nowland</b>	<b>Harriet</b>	<b>shop &amp; cottage</b>
Self & Denshire		Nowland	Harriet	store & dwelling
Gill	John	Nowland	Harriet	office & room
Nowland	Harriet	Nowland	Harriet	Royal Hotel

After enlarging the photograph of the butcher's shop it appears to read as R & S Rowland, Butchers. James and Richard Rowland dissolved their partnership in 1869 and Richard took in his brother Samuel as partner so it would appear that the photograph was taken 1869 or later and was towards Harriet Nowland's Royal Hotel (NAB Bank). There was no change in 1871. In 1872 Richard Rowland is listed as occupier and in 1873 the site is unoccupied, but listed as old butcher shop.

Therefore, the photograph was most likely taken between 1869 and 1871 or perhaps 1872. The photograph indicates that it was occupied, but it is unknown who the people are.

Occupier		Owner		Building
Nowland	Harriet	Nowland	Harriet	hotel
Hegarty	Ann	Nowland	Harriet	house
Dowell	SJ	Nowland	Harriet	store
Gurry	John	Nowland	Harriet	house
		Nowland	Harriet	<b>old butcher shop</b>
McAuley	Wm	Nowland	Harriet	house
Keating	Wm	Nowland	Harriet	shop
Fagan	Terrence	Hodges	Wm	blacksmith shop
Clark	Alexander	Hodges	Wm	house
Brown	Alfred	Hodges	Wm	house
Rowland	James	Hodges	Wm	inn

Note: In 1873 the Council reversed the order of buildings in the rate books.

<sup>12</sup> Maitland Mercury 25 June 1870

<sup>13</sup> Maitland Mercury 6 August 1870, 23 July 1872 & 30 August 1873

<sup>14</sup> LPI Bk 140 No. 783 12 Feb 1874 & Bk 143 No. 60 20 June 1874

## HOW FRESH WAS THE MEAT?

If you look carefully at the building that was the butcher's shop, meat can be seen hanging in the open air accessible to every passing fly as well as the dust from Bridge Street. There was no refrigeration until the early 1900s and although perforated zinc sheets were available to make a meat safe the cost was prohibitive. Maggots in meat were common.

Most small-town butchers had their own slaughterhouse in the backyard or on the edge of town. The local police were the inspectors of slaughterhouses and a license was required to operate one. While meat was relatively cheap, it had to be ordered every day. Hopefully it was not off. In summer, the butcher would wait until the evening to kill and at best, the meat would last three days. The local butcher cured his own meat to stop it going bad and who knows what went into the sausages. So much for the good old days.

Author: Rob Tickle

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## The Chair

An interesting piece of advertising discovered by Bill Spicer while researching A R Lang's furniture store.

### About a Chair

I am getting an old Chair now, but although old age is creeping on me I am glad to say that I stand it well. I have had a splendid constitution, because ever since I came into existence, I have had constant worry and much knocking about. My first master was one of those who was fond of company, and I being a most comfortable chair, was much used, and a great many of those to whom I became a convenience, were not very particular how they treated me. Sometimes they would throw themselves back on my hind legs, and would you believe it, would even throw their legs over my arms, racking my poor joints very much. After some time, however, I got into the employ of an old lady who used me kindly herself; but she had a number of grandchildren always coming "round" who were very rough with me, sometimes tying me with cords and throwing me down and using me for a cart in the back yard on the gravel. That was too hard on me was it not?

The world, however, is daily changing, and in course of time I was sold with the rest of the old lady's traps and sent away some 60 miles over a rough country on a bullock dray to a station. There I had a sad time of it, as the young folk were always skylarking with me and knocking about in all directions. But with all that I stand the test of years and all the knocking about very well. I don't want to be too jolly or boast too much, but I believe I am nearly as good as ever. There is not a tenon broke in me yet, or a joint gone, and if they would only send me back to where I came from, for a little rest, and to get polished up a bit, I am sure there would be many years work in me yet. I'm game to bet I'll see a lot of young ones out yet—those fancy gingerbread delicate chairs, that come from goodness knows where, but I reckon you'll want to know where I came from. Well, the truth is, I came from A. R. LANG'S Market Street Muswellbrook. (Muswellbrook Chronicle Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> February 1908)

### Personal Note



Having restored probably almost a hundred such chairs over the last twenty years I can fully appreciate the above story. The spindle backed chairs, often with turned rungs and patterned backs, seldom needed more than to be pulled apart, the old glue removed and then reglued. With care they would be good for a second hundred years. The most coats of paint I have removed from one chair is five.

I eventually gave up on replacing cane as it became too expensive and hard to obtain. Also the weaving was very time consuming.



Editor

## Keeping food fresh

Rob Tickle's article reminded me of my experiences when much, much younger.

Growing up in the 1940s and 1950 few people owned a refrigerator. Almost everyone owned an ice chest. Ours sat just outside the kitchen door on an enclosed verandah between the kitchen and the rest of the house. It was too hot in the kitchen. It was our job to collect ice before school.

Like many other kids in Aberdeen we had what was called a billy cart. It was just a box on wheels with two shafts. We either pulled it or pushed it over to the abattoirs about a kilometre away. You then entered the freezer which was about the size of a large double garage. You then asked the attendant for a sixpenny block of ice. He spent all day in the freezer so he wore a couple of jumpers and two oversized coats. Around his feet were tied hessian bags. He would then take a crosscut saw and saw you off a block of ice. This was put into a sugar bag and placed in the billy cart.

It was then up to the butcher's shop which was also in the grounds to get the meat order. The meat was placed on the ice and then we made a mad dash for home as we had to be back in time to catch the bus to Muswellbrook High School. The abattoirs produced tons of ice which was packed into the outside shells of the railway carriages that were used to transport the beef and sheep carcasses to Sydney.



Restored ice chest identical to ours  
Chest & photo from Lionel Ahearn

Eventually we were able to afford a refrigerator. It was a Kelvinator with a sealed motor. It took pride of place of place under the only power point in the whole house. Later when a few more power points were installed it was moved to the lounge room which was the coolest room in the house. In summer the only fan was set up to blow on the motor which was usually too hot to touch.

The freezing part was just big enough to hold two ice cube trays. They were often packed with frozen mullet fillets after a day spent fishing in the Hunter River. This refrigerator stood the test of time until we went out to work and threw in enough money to buy a more updated model.



The only other method of cooling food was what we called a drip safe. This was a metal cube with all sides including the door punched with hundreds of holes. It was hung from a branch of the pepper corn tree outside the back door and covered with a hessian bag onto which water dripped. The air blowing over and through the safe evaporated the water and cooled the inside by a few degrees.

As far as I can remember there was never any frozen food purchased. Everything was fresh and shopping occurred regularly so rarely was anything kept for more than a day or two. Lots of corned meat was eaten and in season loads of fruit was bottled in Fowler preserving jars

Ice Chest produced by Barrett, Elliot & Beck joinery works, Muswellbrook

MSL&FH Society Inc photo 200

*The above article is included to fill the last page. I dislike empty spaces. I hope you might find it of interest.* Lionel Ahearn , Editor

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**New Member:** - The Society welcomed a new member, Lorna P. Lowe, Muswellbrook. NSW.

The Society wishes our Members, Patrons, Family & Friends a Merry Christmas & a Happy New Year  
Enjoy the festive season & if travelling stay safe.

The Society will be closed during Christmas & re-opens on the 11th January 2020