

# 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 2021

## Merry Christmas to all.



On Saturday, 4<sup>th</sup> December at 12.30, the members enjoyed a marvellous Christmas Dinner in the Library Seminar Room. Members contributed to the meal and as usual they provided a feast that was appreciated by all. A special thanks to Heather Meissner for her organisation and to Garry Meissner for organising the setting up.

Photos courtesy of Margaret Dolahenty

Linda Newman, Helen Ellis and Heather Meissner with thoughts perhaps of seconds.

Our thanks to the Library Staff for their cooperation not only on this occasion but throughout the year. The Society members greatly appreciate it.



## Opening times for December and January

The Society will be open on the 11<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December. We will open again on 8<sup>th</sup> January 2022.

There is a large collection of books for sale which would make great Christmas presents. Please join us when convenient. Visitors are always welcome.

### 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 Saturday of each month starting at 12.00 in the Society Room at the rear of the Muswellbrook Library. All members and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting.

#### 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>

## Sylvester Thornton

The following article was found by Rob Tickle while researching on another subject. It appeared in the *Armidale Express* 20/7/1883. This article is similar to 'Getting a Doctor', a story published in the April 2021 Newsletter. It shows the extreme difficulties faced when an accident or serious illness occurred.

A very serious accident occurred at 4D Station [just west of Caroona, Liverpool Plains] last week to a young man named Sylvester Thornton, who had been some time employed in shooting kangaroos. From what I can learn (says the Quirindi correspondent of the *Murrurundi Times*), Thornton was about two miles away from his hut shooting, and mounting a stump to get a better shot, he slipped and the hammer of his rifle striking the stump entered Thornton's left arm at the wrist and coming out at the elbow on the opposite side, and entered his throat about two inches under the chin, smashing right through the teeth etc, going through the upper jaw and doing the same, and burying itself between the gums and the upper lip, immediately below the nose.

Thornton was stupefied for a short time, and with great effort struggled back to his hut for help. He waited for about 20 minutes before his mate arrived, and during all this time blood was flowing freely from his wounds. With as little delay as possible a spring cart was procured, and the patient driven towards Quirindi; but as the quick motion of the cart caused too much pain, a walking pace was the fastest he could stand. A man was sent post haste for the doctor to come and meet the cart as it was feared Thornton would bleed to death. The doctor was unable to attend, and on hearing this Mr Chas Allen, chemist, rode about 12 miles, and with the aid of the light of some matches, stopped the bleeding in the throat, and tied the artery of the arm, and stayed by the patient's side until O'Neil's hotel was reached, where he was made as comfortable as possible.

On Thursday last, although in a very weak and dangerous state, he went by the mail train to his home at Muswellbrook, and I believe is progressing as well as possible. The bullet was extracted by Thornton while waiting at the hut.

Comment: Sylvester Thornton was only around 18 years of age when the accident happened. He was a son of Sidney and Annie Thornton of Muswellbrook and a grandson of Sylvester Thornton, the first owner of the Family Hotel, Muswellbrook. He survived the accident, married and lived until he was 87 years.

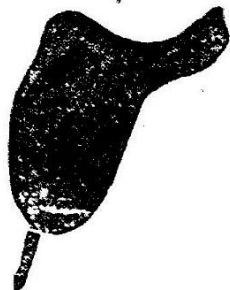


The above photo is of the Family Hotel in 1910 when it traded as the Budden Family Hotel MSL&FHS photo 2492

## A Muswellbrook Saddler and the Kemp SADDLE

Fred Smith and his sons carried on a saddlery business in Market Street Muswellbrook for 90 years. Fred, born in 1872, was reported as 'opening his saddlery shop in Market Street in 1888 and it soon became known throughout the colony for the "Kemp Narrow Grip Saddle".' Fred died, aged 70, in 1942.

### THE NARROW GRIP MUSWELL- BROOK KEMP SADDLE.



Our Muswellbrook Kemp Saddles to be exhibited at the Show Are All Ordered. We get orders from everywhere. Price Mounted, £11 10'. Cash with order. Freight extra. All Hand Sewn.

FRED SMITH  
Market-street Muswellbrook,  
Phone: 103.

Fred served his apprenticeship with 2 Muswellbrook saddlers, Davison and Harris. Fred trained four sons as saddlers. Two sons, Mervyn and Eric continued the business known as E. V. & M. Smith until it closed in 1975. In a newspaper article, Mervyn, aged 65, stated 'it takes about 48 hours solid work to complete a hand made saddle but the finished product will last a lifetime if looked after properly. Each saddle is made to fit the rider, it is made according to his height, weight and class of work he is doing.' 'All leather was sourced from Queensland because they use more wattle in the tanning up there and this tans the leather better.'

For many years, Eric and Mervyn Smith divided work in the shop, Mervyn doing all repair work while Eric made saddles. The original shop premises, which served the firm for 60 years was located in Market Street, where the dental business and CWA hall is now. The business moved to other premises just down the road next to the Railway Hotel. At that time this area was in the centre of town not far from the railway station.

The newspaper advertisement appeared in the *Muswellbrook Chronicle* in March 1926

The Kemp saddle was made as a buckjumping saddle. It was said to be developed by Jack Daly who was also known as "Professor Paddy Kemp".

'The Kemp buckjumping show travelled extensively from 1903 to 1906 and then from 1914 on and off until the late 1920s. Riding conditions were hard. The equipment consisted of Kemp's roughriding poley saddles or exercise saddles with no crupper.' 'A chest rein was fastened to the girth and came up between the horse's forelegs for the rider to hold on to, so they had no control over the horse's head.'

Kemp was said to be a showman and 'recited Australian bush poetry and told tallish stories during the breaks in the buckjumping shows.'

At the time of ceasing business, the Smiths were four years ahead with orders. They stopped taking orders months ahead of closing. This Muswellbrook business was well known and continued successfully for 90 years.

Bill Spicer

References: Muswellbrook Chronicle newspapers, Cowboys, Roughriders and Rodeos. Jenny Hicks. Angus and Robertson.

This beautifully presented, well cared for saddle was handcrafted and individually fitted by saddler Fred Smith for John, the eldest son of Alison and Bob Hordern many years ago. It has been used by a number of the family over many years.

The photo opposite was taken by Lionel Ahearn during the collection of stories which later appeared in *The Way It Was – Shopping in Muswellbrook* compiled by Glenda Murray and published by our Historical Society in August 2014



It was brought in by Alison Hordern in May 2014 and displayed during the launching of the book.



## Conroy's Hotel.



This building was located on Allotment nine, Section 2 town of South Muswellbrook on the corner of Sydney and Mill Streets. MSLFHS photo 0234

In 1973, Muswellbrook historian W Allan Wood wrote:

Under the sign of the Tradesman's Arms, at the beginning of 1848 Edward Richardson opened an inn at the corner of Sydney and Mill Streets, Sylvester's shop and bakery now occupy the site.

In 1854 the licence was renewed to Edward Richardson under the name of the Muswellbrook Inn. On behalf of Richardson, the same house was advertised to be sold by auction on February 27, 1857, as the Sir William Denison Hotel. The stone walls were 18 inches in thickness and the verandah was 70 feet in length. A preliminary survey has been made for a railway to the North, to cross Sydney Street. Pegs marked the route to pass through the yard of this hotel.

As the Travellers' Home, the licence passed in 1860 from Michael Jones, deceased, to Elizabeth Innis, widow, Leeke(sic) Conroy was the innkeeper in January 1862. However, bright prospects faded when a new survey for the railway took a different course through the town.

The inn beginning as the Tradesman's Arms, and in 14 years of trading had carried four signs, ceased to be a public house.<sup>1</sup>

Arthur Peacock was the owner and publisher of the *Upper Hunter Standard* newspaper. He began publishing the paper from premises on the corner of Bridge and Hill Streets in 1882.

Peacock moved his office from Bridge Street to Sydney Street. The rate books record 'A Peacock occupied premises in Sydney Street owned by Mrs E Conroy from 1884 to 1888.'

Later owned by Joseph Leahey. Sometime between 1919 and 1930 the building was demolished. In 1930 a single storey brick building was constructed for Mr C Morris.

Courtesy Bill Spicer

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<sup>1</sup> *Muswellbrook Chronicle* 6 June 1973. Further research indicates this is incorrect. The Inn was located on the opposite corner of Sydney and Mill Streets where the former butcher shop and the current Chinese restaurant is located.