

# 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. 2 April 2022

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## Typewriter Display

### Muswellbrook Library

The latest display set up in the glass cabinets is courtesy of Mr Anyerin Drury. This is only a small part of his extensive collection which is well in excess of a hundred machines. He also repairs and cleans the machines and they are all in working order.

The collection includes some very old machines as well as some of the later models. Of particular interest is one that can be used to type a musical score. Another is an early model which has extra rows of keys. The lower rows type lower case while the upper rows type upper case.

Anyerin has included explanatory notes (typed of course) and it is well worth a visit to the library to see such a large collection in one place.



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## Floods

We are indebted to Bill Young for the following article. In this time when the east coast of Australia has just experienced record floods causing great hardship, it gives an indication of the hardships endured in the Hunter Valley in 1955. The Young's farm was at Bureen via Denman.



Flood taken from Dumaresq Street on 24/2/1955 Society photo 2451 overlooking Kayuga Bridge and flooded flats to the west of Muswellbrook

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### 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>

## First person account 1955 flood in the Upper Hunter Valley First day of flood 23rd February, 1955

Written by our mother, Joyce Young, in a time before the internet and mobile phones. She is writing this account to her mother, father and her eldest son, Kit, who happened to be staying in Sydney with his grandparents at the time of the flood. She was marooned on their dairy farm, 'Tangorin', with her husband, Tim, a daughter, Sue, a son, Bill, and a 7 month old baby boy, Davey.

'Tangorin'  
Denman NSW  
Friday, 24th ??

Dear Mum, Dad and Kit

Well, we certainly 'copped it' this time. We are in the throes of the biggest flood the Hunter Valley has ever had. You'd have to see it to believe it. Our telegraph poles are right under water, and only the top of the dairy is sticking out. The water is lapping on the bottom of the transformers at the road. Way over the top of the front gate and the milk stand, over the top of the shed at the windmill with all our electric motors 15 feet under water, over the top of the shed and the 40 gallon drum on top of it at the first well, and the Lister engine completely submerged. From our dairy to the hills opposite and the full length of the valley, there is not a blade of grass to be seen. In other words, the Hunter River is in our dairy and every scrap of land in the entire valley is under water. Electricity is off, telephones down, and of course no mail so we have heard absolutely no news, but can only guess that Maitland must be completely wiped out. The losses are incredible. Lucerne paddocks gone, haystacks gone. The man across the river lost 40 cattle that got marooned. Tonges' house was full of water and their sharefarmer's house has had the water half way up it. People are marooned there and also at Bob Gee's, and nobody can help them. We're so thankful we built the hayshed up near the house as it would have been lost on the flat. Not one farm on this road is out of the water and all our electric motors and irrigation plants are under it all. There wasn't warning to get anything. Fancy, Kit, the water is over the paling fence around the dairy and was washing in and out of the windows. Drums of kerosene and trees and dead cows float by and it is still raining. I do wish we could get some news. Luckily, we have a bit of food in the house. No bread of course, but I make scones each day. I had to suddenly give bubby a Vita Brit last night as there was no wood dry to cook his groats. He seemed to like it and it hasn't hurt him. I heard the new Martindale Bridge has gone. Don't know if it is true yet but if it is that's our last hope of getting supplies for weeks. I think we miss the radio the most as we crave for news. If it had been on, we

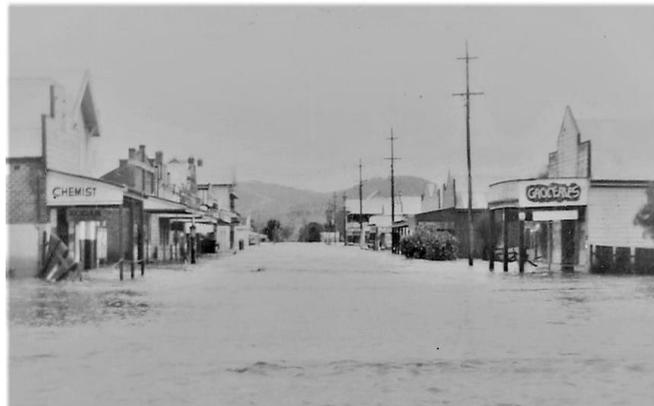
may have saved one of our motors, for we'd have heard the warning of the local waters.

### *Main Street of Denman*

We've had 12 inches of rain in 10 days. The maddening part is that it's all run off and done damage and now we probably won't get any more until Xmas.

I won't be able to post this for ages so may add to it. For the present, Joy.

I'm not sure what day it is today. We've lost all touch with the outside world.



Anyway, last night the water had receded greatly and we went to bed happy in the thought that today we would be able to link up the telephone wires and perhaps hear some news and ring you, but when we woke this morning, the river had come down once more and the flats were under again. Oh, what heartbreak. Tim desperately wanted to get to the Lister engine and put oil through it but it can't be reached. They managed to get the cows into the dairy by swimming them through the gate. At least they were milked, and all the separating has to be done by hand. The latest news is that the Martindale Bridge is alright but two spans of the Yarrowa Bridge, the big high one, have gone. So that is worse, as with the Goulburn Bridge never being repaired, we now have no way of reaching town.

The rain won't let up for any of the washing to dry, so poor bub is like a waif dressed in any old thing. I've got about six dry nappies left – all the rest have been washed but it's impossible to dry them.

Three of Frazer's pigs swam down here and ended up in our calf yard. All Rodney Wilkinson's hay bales floated out of his hayshed. I'll write more news as I get it.



**4pm:** Just got some news from the top end of the road. Tom Moylan lost 30 cows and 2 horses – drowned. Woodlands Stud lost all their racetrack and horse buildings, and also one of the boys working there drowned. Tiers lost 40 cows – drowned. Carl Wolfgang lost his machinery shed. The hay baler and other machines were in it but he doesn't know yet if they are still there. Anyway, they were right under the water if they are there. Also, all his hay bales. An aeroplane was flying low over here today. They dropped supplies on Charlie O'Hara's, and we waved frantically but although they flew over us, they must have run out of parcels. We did so want to see a newspaper. Do save some for us as we'll probably never get any now.

**9pm:** Word came through that our road's share of the aeroplane parcel was to be divided up at Browns, so Tim went off in the dark on Nellie, and he's home now with ½ a loaf of bread, 2lbs of butter, 1lb of flour and 1lb of salt, all of which I am very grateful for.

**9am:** I think its Sunday. The plane flew over again this morning, and we waved once more and he turned and did a run up over us and out came the yellow parachute, but it landed on Whitten's property. Of course, we were all very excited.

**11am:** John just came up with 2 loaves of bread that had been got through somehow. Apparently the Yarrowa Bridge is a wreck. The little bridge on our road can only be walked on. All the transformers from Jim Brown's to the end of the road are gone so we probably won't get electricity for months. Just heard they had to shoot Bob Gee's horse as it was caught in the flood and got badly torn on a barbed wire fence. Bob was in Singleton and of course can't get home.

**Monday:** Still no news from outside. How I'd love a newspaper or radio. Sue went off to school this morning by walking over the hills. Billy's new game is making an aeroplane out of two pieces of wood, then dropping supplies by it. With the electricity off, we are of course out of water except for rain water, but there is none in the bathroom so that puts the toilet, basin and bath out of use, so we bath in the baby's bath in the blue room. It really is funny, but at least it does make you feel cleaner. We still can't get any vehicle out of our place. Tim rode over to the river last night and every fence is down or covered with silt, even the good new fence by the river. The flat is covered with somebody else's dead sheep, and huge trees are lying in the middle of our oats paddock – that was. If you're speaking to Nancy, or anyone who is in the newspaper game, tell them when there is a flood that what the people in it want most is news, as radio and telephones are the first things to go out of action, so if in every food parcel a few papers were included, I'm sure they would be equally as welcome as the food.

**12.30pm:** I'm just making something really exciting for lunch. It's called 'ETLOMIF'. In English that means 'everything that's left over made into fritters'. You just wouldn't believe what is in them, but they smell good so I hope they taste the same. At least they should fill all the empty corners and stick to the ribs for a few days. Cooking is a little difficult for I have two of the electric motors on the end of the little stove, trying to dry them out, then a huge boiler of water for washing up the dairy things, and our 'baths' at night, so it doesn't leave me too much space to cook on. Tim just got the little tractor over the gully so has gone to Clive's to try and borrow some petrol for the small Lister engine at the dairy. The big tractor has been bogged for days but luckily out of reach of the flood waters.

**3pm:** A Lancaster has been circling over us and we waved madly and did so hope for papers but none came. News from Tim's visit this morning was that Jim Brown's well has just fallen in on top of his new motor. Most of the land across Greg's Creek on our place has vanished.

We are going to try to get up to the old Goulburn Bridge tonight. The flying fox there was washed away but you can shout across and I'll try and get someone to ring you or send you a telegram.

**9am Tuesday:** Sue went off to school this morning on Nellie.

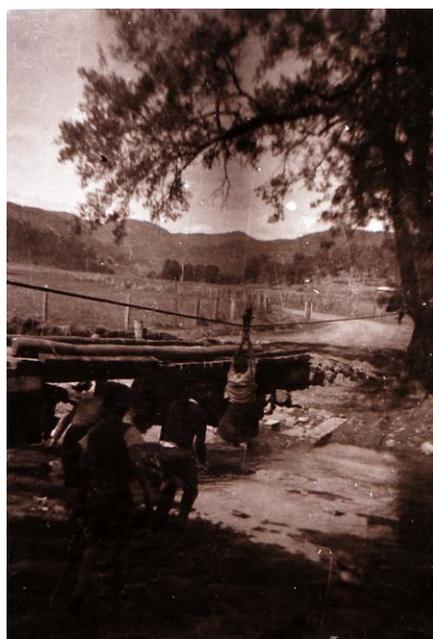
Well, we pulled the car across the gully yesterday afternoon with the tractor and went off to the school. The Lancaster had dropped some bread and another plane some other supplies. They sent the bread down without a parachute so it was all broken up but we were still glad to get it. At the school everything was divided out to the 23 families on the road. We got 1 loaf of bread, 2lbs of butter, 1½ tea, 3lbs of sugar and 12 assorted tins of food (jam, vegies, stew, spaghetti, baked beans, powdered milk). All were very welcome as it looks it looks as if we may be cut off for a long time yet. We drove on up to Ossie's to get some petrol from his bowser and, oh Kit, you should just see the damage up that end. From Rodney's dairy and right across Wolfgang's is just sand. No sign of a fence or a gate or a well. Our fences are all knocked over, but theirs are all just buried under about 4 feet of solid sand. They'll never be able to dig them out again. It's too awful. We couldn't get to the end of the road yet, and couldn't get any messages out.

We heard yesterday how they got a line across the missing Yarrowa Bridge to set up a small flying fox. The problem was to get the line across about 250 feet of missing bridge. Too far to throw accurately, then someone got a bright idea. They tied a nylon fishing line around a short nail head and drove it into a golf ball. Then they got Denman's best golfer and he teed up on one side of the bridge and drove a shot that went straight across the gap, with the nylon line attached. The other end of it was tied to a heavy rope, which was soon pulled across and a small flying fox put into action.



Tim has gone off this morning to a working party at our little bridge where they are filling the hole with stones, so once we can cross our bridge, we can get to Yarrowa and send this epistle over to be posted.

Denman was back on electric power last night. How we envied them. I hear the water was a foot deep in Kranty's store shed, Kit, so that will give you some idea of Denman town. Oh, and I forgot to tell you – while we were at the school, a little Moth 2-seater plane flew very low over us, circled, then came down to only about 30 feet off the ground and switched off its engine, and the pilot spoke through a loud speaker 'Are you OK for food?'. We waved 'yes' and off he went. It wasn't until he'd gone we all wished we'd shouted for newspapers, as we still have had no news at all except these few wee snatches. Even the few battery radios in the district are off now as the batteries are flat. You'd think somebody would think to put a newspaper in a parcel.



Bill is all for aeroplanes now, especially after the one at school.

Oh dear, a little pig has just walked past. I suppose it is another one of the Frazer's. Tim found a Primus stove in the River Paddock. All the flats are a beachcomber's dream now, you're likely to find anything, including some things you'd rather not find.

We wonder how the Hickson's are. It may be weeks before we can get in touch with them.

Poor Mary has her brother's two children staying there, including the baby.

When I arrived at the school yesterday, I was amused as Sue rushed over and said "Oh Mummy, how could you bring Davey out in his old working clothes!". Well, if you had only seen us all, you'd have realised how funny it was.

I hope Tim can get our windmill going again as this 'no water' is the most inconvenient thing. I wish we had a few Mortein Pressure Paks as the flies rising off the dead carcasses are awful, and the mosquitoes are breeding in millions in the stagnant water, and I'm right out of any sort of fly spray.

**2pm:** Well, Bill and Davey and I just had a lot of fun. I'd just finished feeding baby and I heard a plane flying over so out we all went and as usual all waved a blanket, hoping really for papers and not expecting anything else, if there, when suddenly the plane circled and came in very low over our electric light wires and dropped two parcels right in the front garden, almost at my feet, circled again and dropped two more in the vegetable garden, circled again and dropped two more. Oh dear, it was a thrill. They were small parcels and all came down without parachutes, and when I collected them, two were baby food parcels. They must have seen me nursing Davey. It really was fun and the pilot was a champion. Fancy landing them all right in our garden. Bill just said "If that plane comes down, I'll give the pirate (meaning pilot) a penny". May have a chance to post this.

Lots of love to you all from us all.

Joy