

PASTIMES

January/March 2013

Issue No: 9

OLD COURTHOUSE & POLICE
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NELLIGEN - PART 2

In this issue we continue our article on the history of Nelligen. Where we left off, we had reached 1866 when Nelligen had a population of about 150 people and there was a Post Office, Police Station and National School. *Continued on Page 2*

THE AUSTRAL STARCH FACTORY

A little known piece of Nelligen's history is that it was home to a productive starch business in the 1920's *Continued Page 3*

WHAT'S HAPPENING AT THE MUSEUM

We have been building the skills of our volunteers through a fabric workshop that looked at our collection of clothing and have a new look website thanks to one of our wonderful volunteers *See pages 4 and 5*

WHAT OTHER MUSEUMS ARE DOING

To keep people coming back, it is important to rotate our displays and make them interesting. Knowing what other Museums are doing helps us to improve our own. *See Page 6*

Change to the frequency of PASTIMES

Following increased interest among our readers, we will now try to bring you the newsletter every other month.

The Illawarra and South Coast Steam Navigation Company's ship Bergalia at the Nelligen Wharf



The opening of a road between Braidwood and Nelligen made delivering product from Braidwood to the markets of Sydney and

Did you know that the Illawarra Steam Navigation Company serviced the south coast of NSW from 1858 to the early 1950s (although it had a few name changes along the way). In 1870, the schedule showed that the Clyde River (which had several ports including Nelligen) was serviced every three days. Moruya was visited every two weeks in the same period. (Source: Pemberton, Barry (1979). Australian Coastal Shipping. Carlton, Victoria: Melbourne University Press, Page 81.) Some additional information provided by Ewan Morrison

Nelligen - Part 2

Richardson's Hotel on the corner of Braidwood and Reid Streets opened in 1867. The national school closed and in 1869 construction of a new school house and residence was completed.

The school remained in use until 1970 however both the school teacher's residence and the school building were replaced in 1923. Prior to 1871, the main road south from Nowra went via Currowan, Nelligen

and Runnyford. However, with the establishment of a ferry service across the Clyde River at Bateman's Bay, the route via Nelligen lost its importance. A ferry service across the Clyde at Nelligen was commenced by a Mr Templeman in 1878, allowing a much shorter route to Bateman's Bay than via Runnyford.

A timber mill and wattlebark crusher were built for H Manning at Nelligen in 1871. He supplied George Webber's wheelwright shop with blue gum and iron bark timber.

Nelligen's first church was the Roman Catholic Church, constructed of timber and opened 24 November 1872. The C of E church, St Nicholas was built in 1875 on the allotment to the west of St Josephs, but was destroyed by bushfire in 1939.

By the later part of the 1870s the goldfields had begun to wane and Nelligen's trade and growth dropped to the extent that some businesses closed. Commerce centred around

sawmilling, oystering and wattlebark processing, with six timber mills operating along the Clyde. A telegraph office was opened in 1878.



The Teacher's residence c 1900

In 1882 the license for the Steampacket Hotel was renewed and Mr Francis Guy was active in Commerce. In 1884 local sawmills started cutting railway sleepers and Nelligen enjoyed renewed prosperity as a busy

timber port.

A new courthouse was completed in 1893 just west of the Watch House. It was later converted to St Nicholas C of E church after the previous C of E church burnt down in the 1939 bushfire. There was a small gold rush locally in 1894. In 1895 Mr Hannaford was the host at the Steampacket Hotel and Mr Shoebridge had a store in the town adjacent to which he opened a large dining room for the Queen's Birthday celebrations and Nelligen Aquatic carnival. The new RC church (St Josephs) was opened in May 1896. The building remains and is now in private hands.

Floods had occurred regularly with a devastating flood in February 1860 when the Clyde ran 3 metres above the high tide mark. A heavy flood in 1898 threatened low lying buildings and their stock including ISN Co's store, Shellharbour Co's store, Steampacket Hotel and Shoebridge's general store.

Continued in next issue

The story of Nelligen is taken from work undertaken by Pip Giovanelli for the Eurobodalla Shire Council. It was published in 2010 and is titled Nelligen Main Street Study

Francis (Frank) GUY, is interesting. After trying his hand at gold mining near Mogo (likely where he made enough to set up in business), he built an empire. GUY is described variously as a storekeeper, a ship-builder (which wasn't true – he engaged shipwrights to build vessels for his business interests), an innkeeper, an exporter (the ships he commissioned to be built carried his goods between Batemans Bay, Sydney, and ports in NZ and Victoria) and a saw mill owner (he opened a saw mill in Batemans Bay in 1868).

THE AUSTRAL STARCH FACTORY

Upstream from Nelligen, lies the remains of the township of Currowan. Once a flourishing gold town, it was also home to the Austral Starch Factory.

This story begins with the burrawang (*Macrozamia Spiralis*). Also called the Zamia Palm. It is not a palm, though the leaves have a palm-like look.

A correspondent in the Town and Country Journal of 22 March 1879 wrote of burrawangs making good quality, edible starch in profitable quantities.

During World War 1 the focus on the burrawang shifted to using it as a source of fuel for automobiles. The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) of 7 Dec 1917 reported that Grove JOHNSON, consulting chemist to Tooth's Brewery, was asked by the Commonwealth Council of Advice on Science and Industry to investigate the recovery of industrial alcohol (ethanol) from the burrawang.

Johnson's experiments found that burrawang root comprises roughly 25 per cent of starch, 25 per cent, of fibre, and 50 per cent, water.

Using a simple process Johnson found burrawang root yielded about 45 gallons (204 l) per ton (900 kg) of proof spirit for about half the cost of similar extraction processes.

The Warwick Examiner and Times of the 17 Dec 1917 reported: "... On the South Coast there are hundreds of acres practically given up to the burrawang...". The article also referred to similar stands of the burrawang around Woy Woy and in Western Australia.

In the same article it was reported that "At Bateman's Bay immense supplies of burrawang are available, with all the conditions of cheap production ... For his recent experiments Mr Johnson obtained 16 palms, the aggregate weight of which was 2 tons 16cwt." (2800 Kg).

On 25 Nov 1919, the Forestry Commission of NSW released a tender for a 10 year lease over 31000 acres (12545 ha) at Currowan. The focus for production had shifted away from ethanol back to starch.

On 23 Nov 1920, the SMH reported "a syndicate of Sydney businessmen has acquired a site at Currowan and has erected a factory and plant for the extraction of starch from the burrawang ..." The company was called the Austral Starch Factory.

One can only imagine the difficulty of harvesting burrawangs in the rugged country of the Clyde Valley using teams of horses and bullocks to uproot them and get them to the factory.

The Austral Starch Factory didn't last. A public notice in the SMH of 7 Mar 1923 invited tenders for the purchase and removal of the company's property. The liquidator wound the company up on 26 Nov 1923 in Sydney.

Anecdotally, the factory building remained at Currowan and was used by the Community for dances and meetings until at least the 1960's.



The photograph above is of the seed pod of the burrawang. The Austral Starch Factory used the more difficult to handle root of the plant to produce starch.

This article was researched and written by Ewan Morrison using newspaper articles retrieved from the National Library using their on-line search tool Trove.

If you have some insights about the Austral Starch Factory, Ewan would love to hear from you.

Fabric Workshop

As a follow up to the Society's successful completion of the Museum Standards Program, we receive additional encouragement from South East Arts in the form of occasional support visits from a professional Museum Advisor.

Rebecca Jones supports 5 museums down the far south coast and February 14th saw Bec conducting a training workshop on identifying and cataloguing items from the Courthouse costume collection.

Joining us for the day was Nerida Cook, committee member with Moruya Historical Society.

Myf Thompson, Museum Curator, says, "One short

white dress was viewed which no-one was keen to keep ... quite modern in design and obviously hand-sewn from inexpensive synthetic materials, and, most importantly, **no story!**

Storage space is always a problem and we were about to reject the dress when Rebecca turned up the petticoat hem and revealed a tiny blue ribbon bow.

"Wedding Dress!" we exclaimed, recalling the old rhyme traditional to a bride's outfit, "Something Old, Something New, Something Borrowed, Something Blue". As it was St Valentine's Day the dress won a reprieve and it's back in the collection.

Who says historians aren't romantic!

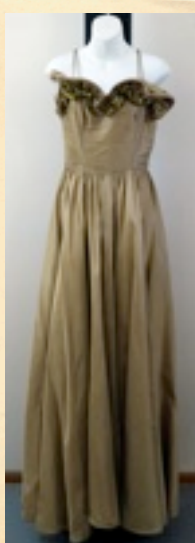
We all enjoyed the day, and 80per cent of the costumes we held were period identified, catalogued and photographed.

Now that's Teamwork!

An introduction to new ideas, or training which you can apply to your own interests, are some of the benefits of Society membership.



L to R Historical Society members Sandra Smith and Gail Foggo, visiting Museum Advisor Rebecca Jones, and guest Nerida Cook, Moruya Historical Society.



This gorgeous gold evening gown we now know is circa 1950s

Our New Website

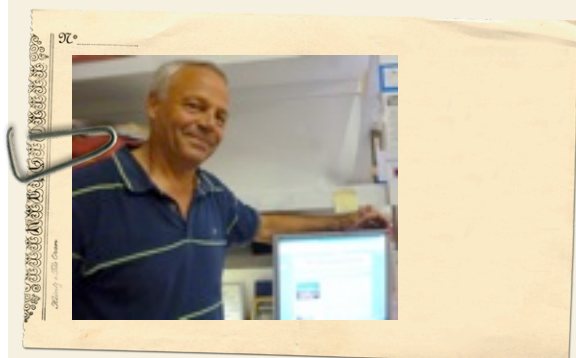
Shortly after joining the museum as a volunteer, Chris Ruzala was asked to have a look at the existing museum website. His brief was to assess its effectiveness and determine whether improvements could be made to it, either through upgrading the existing site or by replacing it with a new one. After comparing it with other websites for similar organisations, it became apparent that our website had certain weaknesses in its design and the functionality offered to its visitors. Essentially, the website would benefit greatly with additions and changes, such as:

- A design which incorporates modern colours, fonts and backgrounds, to appeal to a wider age-group of visitors;
- A messaging capability, whereby visitors can email the museum directly through the website;
- A calendar feature, whereby visitors can see at a glance what forthcoming museum events have been arranged, where and when;
- more interactive Links page, with images of the related websites and more detailed descriptions;
- A dedicated photos page, for slide shows, videos and themed albums of images;
- Administrator access which allows easy ongoing development and maintenance of the site; and

- If required, an economical form of web support, such as via “chat lines”, rather than via the phone.

Chris started researching what was available at a price the Museum could afford and found that there are numerous companies offering website building services. Of the ones he reviewed, the most attractive and user friendly was a US company called Webs. Currently, over 40 million users have launched their own websites with Webs, and the numbers are increasing. Webs provides multiple pop-up options to assist the site builder in creating and maintaining their site. Changes can be applied by the site Administrator easily and the updated website ‘published’ within a couple of minutes. The Webs Enhanced premium package is its most popular product, it satisfies our requirements and, in Chris’ opinion, represents excellent value for money at only \$7.50 per month (US). It includes a free domain name, up to five email addresses, unlimited pages and the website can also be viewed on your mobile.

Chris’ recommendation to purchase the Webs Enhanced package was accepted by the Committee at its February 2013 meeting.



*On the left is member Chris
Ruzala who has revamped our
website*



What other Museums are doing ...



Map of Alexander's Empire (Source: Wikipedia sighted 12 March 2013)

Alexander III of Macedon (356–323 BCE) owes his epithet 'the Great' to the enormous territory that he dominated: from Greece in the west to the river Indus in the east, resulting in, at the time, the largest empire in antiquity. This is all the more remarkable when we recall that he subjugated this vast region within just eleven years, and that he was only 20 years of age when he came to power. (Source: National Museum of Australia)

I travelled to the Australian Museum in College Street Sydney to see the Alexander Exhibition that was on loan from the Hermitage in St Petersburg.

The exhibition included over 400 objects from classical antiquity through to the modern age from both Western and Non-Western origins, spanning a period of almost 2500 years.

Signature pieces that people travel from all over the world to the State Hermitage to see, included the famous Gonzaga cameo and the polished black basalt statue of Cleopatra VII, were on display!

It was great to see kids roaming about with their iPads and other devices finding parts of the story that had been loaded onto an app they bought from the Museum shop.

PLEASE REPLY TO:

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Recording the maps and drawings we hold
Photographing our artefacts
Researching our artefacts
Telephony Display
The Local Oyster Industry
Cheese production in the district
Blandford House
Maritime History of the District

Can you:

- Build things
- Make things
- Restore things
- Research things
- Help us with our website
- Help us with our IT

Or do you just have an interest?

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