



The Old Courthouse Museum

PASTIMES

*Newsletter of the
Clyde River and Batemans Bay Historical Society Inc.*
Issue 17 – Feb/Mar 2015

PLANNING UNDERWAY FOR A NEW MUSEUM ENTRANCE

As part of its planning to improve the visitor experience over the next couple of years, the Museum has commenced processes to secure external funding to design and construct a new entrance to the Courthouse.



Recently, members of the Executive Committee met with Trevor King, a heritage architect from Dignams Creek, and had very useful initial discussions on proposed building designs, positioning, likely costs and time constraints imposed by our grant funding application to IMB. Trevor is very keen to work with us and likes our proposal to use the proposed structure as both a Welcome (Reception) area for visitors and a permanent home for the Museum's fundraising activities (historical publications, the Book Emporium and handcrafted goods). Watch this space for more updates over the coming weeks!!

LAUNCH OF THE CLYDE RIVER CHRONICLES

After a year of research, the Historical Society has proudly launched its latest historical publication. Covering monthly events year by year, *Clyde River Chronicles* Volume 1, 1770-1900, was compiled from contemporary newspaper and journals by historian Dianne



Hantas (pictured above with Society President Ewan Morrison). Local tragedies and triumphs are put into context by side notes on regional/national events. A useful research tool is the use of symbols against each entry enabling a reader to easily trace the development of themes, such as shipwrecks and land sales. Dianne has been pivotal in the publication of our last 3 books, and is now working on Vol 2. *Vol 1, 1770-1900* is available for sale at the Museum, price \$20.00, plus \$3.50 postage if required.

FEATURED ARTICLES IN THIS ISSUE OF PASTIMES

'A Camera on Gallipoli': The Australian War Memorial's digital exhibition *A camera on Gallipoli*, featuring World War 1 photographs taken by Sir Charles Ryan, has opened in the main courtroom of the museum.

Golden Poetry: Curator Myf Thompson tells the story of **Charles Harpur**, Assistant Gold Commissioner for the southern NSW goldfields and Australia's first native born national poet.

'A Camera on Gallipoli'

The Australian War Memorial's digital exhibition *A camera on Gallipoli*, featuring First World War photographs taken by Sir Charles Ryan, **has opened in the main courtroom of the museum.**

Curator Myf Thompson says "The Museum is thrilled to host its *first ever* Travelling Exhibition, and one of such significance to the community on the 100th anniversary of the ANZAC campaign. '*A camera on Gallipoli*' showcases a series of candid photographs captured by Charles Ryan while serving with the AIF in Turkey in 1915. They cover a range of themes and their informality captures the reality of harsh experience." "While the photos are of broad general interest, we have also issued an invitation to schools in the district to take advantage of the display, which includes excellent educational resources available to teaching staff."

In 1914, at the age of 61, Sir Charles Ryan was appointed consulting surgeon to the AIF, embarking from Melbourne in October towards the Middle East and on to Gallipoli. The Director of the Australian War Memorial, Dr Brendan Nelson, says Charles Ryan's photographs capture the reality behind the 1915 Gallipoli campaign, depicting a unique and often harsh view of our soldiers' experiences.



Located just inside the Courthouse entrance is this stunning display, complementing the photographs of Sir Charles Ryan. Designed by members Barbara Walsh and Alison Cooper, it depicts a grieving mother, who has just been informed of her son's death during active service in the Gallipoli campaign. (She holds a copy of a War Office telegram in her left hand).

The display was completed with a green fabric backdrop, covered in a painting of life-like poppies.

"Ryan's photographs reflect the Australians' true experience of war, depicting the dry, forbidding landscape, tired troops in the trenches, and squalid dug-outs," Dr Nelson said.

"Ryan also managed to capture the true spirit of the Australian soldiers who fought at Gallipoli. Their mateship, stoicism and endurance underpin the photographs and embody the meaning of the Anzac spirit."

Behind the photographs in the exhibition is the story of Charles Ryan's remarkable life. He served as a doctor with the Turkish army in 1877–78, treated Ned Kelly at Glenrowan, was a leading Melbourne surgeon and gave long service as a senior military officer. He was extended high civil and military recognition by his peers.

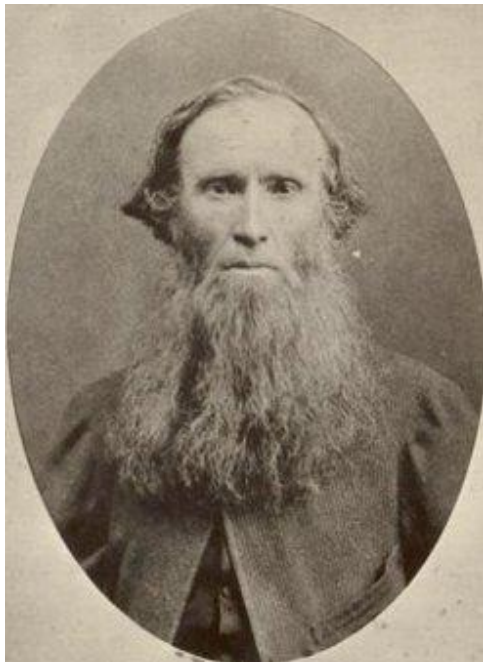
A camera on Gallipoli is a centenary initiative to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. It is on display at **the Old Courthouse Museum from March 3rd until December 2015.**

Golden Poetry

A yellow precious metal, a chemical element with atomic number 79, used in jewellery and decoration and to guarantee the value of currencies. What am I? **Gold**.

Mining for it has been a staple of Eurobodalla Shire's economic history from the 1850s to the turn of the twentieth century. The settlement of **Nerrigundah** and its valley were used as a cattle run by Thomas Mort of Bodalla, before the discovery of [gold in 1861](#). Situated at the head of the Tuross River Valley, some nineteen kilometres inland from [Bodalla](#), the little village is today unrecognisable as a once *frenetic gold mining town boasting 5 hotels, many stores, a police station and courthouse*, drawing thousands of people from many nationalities to its potential riches. It was to produce some of the purest quality gold in NSW.

As word of the diggings spread, also drawn there were local bush rangers. Known as the Clarke Brothers gang, they not only regularly waylaid travelers on the mountainous roads, but in April 1866 terrorised the *town itself*, by locking several residents in a hotel, robbing the store **and** any hapless passerby. Trooper Miles O'Grady, one of the town's two policemen, was shot dead during an attempted arrest, but the gang managed to escape. The posse formed to chase them, though unsuccessful, included **Charles Harpur**, Gold Commissioner, poet, and hero of our story.



Born in Windsor in 1819, Charles was the first of our native born **national poets**. A currency lad, the son of emancipated convicts, his father was a schoolmaster who encouraged his children's education, including a love of the English classics. Through his father's connections, Charles also had access to private libraries, and would later claim his decision to become a poet was made in his early teens.

Longing always for recognition in his literary efforts, he was a prolific contributor of poetry, journalism, and criticism to the colonial press. Charles's earlier career had been an unsettled mix of journalism, sheep farming, and training as a teacher; however, in 1859, he was appointed Assistant Gold Commissioner on the southern goldfields, based initially at Araluen, then at Nerrigundah,

or The Gulph as it was better known.

This position suited Charles. He would have been treated with great respect by the community, acting as an agent of everyday authority, to uphold law and order, to provide access to the gold fields, register gold claims and issue the deeply resented mining licenses. He settled mining disputes, collected government revenues, oversaw land claims, and served as electoral officer.

On appointment to Nerrigundah, Charles moved his family from Araluen to a 500 acre property on the banks of the Tuross River at Eurobodalla, calling the home he built there 'Euroma'. By all accounts, Charles was considered a fair and reasonable man, devoted to his family. Life with his work, his literary output, wife and family went along smoothly for seven years.

In 1866, the government abolished the role of Gold Commissioner and, out of a job, Charles was forced to retire to his farm on the Tuross River until another administrative position became available. There he met with a series of misfortunes; his 13 year old son, Charlie, died in a shooting accident. His daughter, Mary, says that 'From this time, my father was a changed man. Instead of being kindly and loving, he became stern and silent'. The farm, already run down by his extensive duties elsewhere, was devastated by flooding. Charles suffered ongoing ill health, subsequently dying of tuberculosis, in June 1868.



Charles was the first Australian writer to attempt to deal seriously with homegrown real life issues, producing tragedies and epics on Australian subjects at a time when it was generally assumed that Australian material was unsuited to high literature. Yet he was also one of the most accomplished of those writing comic and satirical poems, on political and other local events.

Whilst critics of his day were ambivalent about his dramatic works, his obvious love for the Australian landscape shines through his poems, particularly his appreciative observations of the mountains around him. In Nerrigundah, a fine sandstone memorial to Trooper O'Grady stands in the street where he was shot by the Clarke Brothers, in their pursuit of gold.

Charles Harpur's *literary* contribution is commemorated by 2 small plaques on a piece of granite rock, on a frequently overgrown grass verge, on the road to Eurobodalla and Nerrigundah. Erected at the request of Moruya Historical Society in a Bicentennial year flush with funds, it sits beneath an overhang marking Charles' burial place above, now on private land and therefore inaccessible.

A line from the editor's preface to Charles' Poems –posthumously published by Mary Harpur in 1883 "Wheat and wool and copper and **gold**, are not the only possessions worth striving for. We need constantly to remember that the fine imagination of the *poet* is a gift to be cherished".

Sourced from *Poems*, by Charles Harpur, published by George Robertson; *Memories of my father* by Mary Araluen Baldwin; *The Dictionary of Australian Biography*; and *The Australian Poetry Library*. Material compiled and edited by Myf Thompson.

What's been happening at the Old Courthouse Museum?

MICE INVADE THE MUSEUM



The 2015 programme of temporary exhibits at The Old Courthouse Museum in Batemans Bay sees the Christmas display of vintage cameras replaced by charming mouse costumes from the recent Bay Theatre Players production 'One Act Wonders'. Designer Sam Lloyd (pictured on



the left) selected some 'mouse' costumes and they have attracted a lot of attention. Sam played "Tattymouse", while Museum volunteer Janet Beesley (pictured on the right) was be-whiskered as "Gigglemouse". The next temporary exhibit to come in will be an in-house display of period Hats from our collection.

MUSEUM IN A BOX

The Old Courthouse Museum has installed a travelling display from the Australian Museum's 'Museum in a Box' outreach programme. Visual and performing arts are integral parts of Aboriginal lifestyle and the display examines how Indigenous people express their identity through art and performance.



Visitors can watch a video on making a didgeridoo, from tree selection to creating bird sounds, try their hand at string games, understand the meaning of some pictorial symbols, and browse a range of colourful publications. The display is available until the end of March 2015.



NEW 'PUB SIGN' FOR THE DAIRY SHED



Visitors strolling down the ramp at the rear of the Museum will now find it difficult to miss the Dairy Shed display, as a new sign has been fitted to the adjoining wall. Designed and painted by member Barb Walsh, it is a perfect complement to 'young Daisy' around the corner. This exhibit focusses on the history of the local dairy industry in Eurobodalla Shire.

GRANTS SUB-COMMITTEE TARGETS IMB FOR FUNDING OF NEW MUSEUM ENTRANCE

As mentioned in this issue's cover story, the Grants Sub-Committee submitted an application to the IMB on February 28th 2015, for funding towards the proposed design and construction of a new entrance to the Museum. Comprising Ray Mooney, Chris Ruzala, Myf Thompson and Ewan Morrison, the team has applied for funding of \$30,000 towards a projected total cost of \$133,000. The balance would be met from CR&BBHS and local community contributions. We believe that our submission is of high quality and should be reviewed favourably by IMB. We expect to hear by the end of March, if we have progressed to Stage 2 of the evaluation process.

MUSEUM ON SHOW AT THE 'LIVE LIFE' COMMUNITY EXHIBITION IN MORUYA

In March, members Janet Beesley and Chris Ruzala took the Museum on the road to the 'Live Life' event in the RSL Hall in Moruya. Run by Eurobodalla Shire Council, as part of Seniors Week, local community groups were invited to attend and promote their organisations. Highlight of the morning was the award of 'Eurobodalla Senior Citizen of the Year' by the Mayor to a farmer from Tilba. This was followed by a performance of Scottish dancing by the Batemans Bay Caledonian Society. The picture shows Janet next to the Museum's promotional banner (on loan for the day from the Batemans Bay Visitor Information Centre – thanks again!).



A MODERN APPROACH TOWARDS DISPLAYING MUSEUM ARTEFACTS



Many thanks to the Museum's Maintenance and Building team, who have worked very hard to complete the 'Cabinets of Curiosity'. This exhibit sits colourfully in the Indigenous Keeping Place area, within the main display room. Supervisor Les Smith, along with members Bill Keenan and Chris Lawler, have demonstrated carpentry and painting talents which would put Ikea to shame! The contents of each box will describe a different theme.

MEMBERS ATTEND WORKSHOP ON COSTUME REGISTRATION

In late February, members Mary Maidment, Kerrie Rowe and Curator Myf Thompson attended the Australian Dress Register workshop at the Mechanics Institute in Moruya. It was hosted by Moruya HS and included experts from the Powerhouse Museum and South East Arts. The day was very constructive and helpful, while South East Arts demonstrated our Gallipoli display as an example of online event registration. Kerrie, Mary and member Lesley Moore will be working together on the process of registering some of our costumes on this website.

NEW EXHIBIT OPENS TO DEMONSTRATE INDIGENOUS BASKET WARE SKILLS



Another exhibition to open recently in the Indigenous Keeping Place area of the Museum, is a display of basket ware and related goods. Entitled 'Baskets and Belonging', the picture on the left shows the



complete exhibit, while on the right, local identity Bertha Potts takes a particular liking to one of the items. The collection comprises bags, plates and ornaments.

UPDATE ON NEW BUNNINGS WAREHOUSE

During our last 'Sausage Sizzle' at Bunnings (1/3/2015), I spoke to the Community Groups Coordinator (Sam) about progress with the new store. Sam advised that the project is on course for completion in June 2015, with a planned four day opening weekend celebration and sausage sizzles definitely on the cards. Sam could not give much more information, as the launch of the new warehouse is being tightly controlled from Sydney. All I know for definite is:

- Community Groups will have a dedicated area for prepping and cooking, including washing and cleaning facilities;
- Teams will be expected to be on duty from 9.00am to 4.00pm (minimum);
- The schedule will be extended, to include weekdays (Thursdays/Fridays likely), in addition to weekends and public holidays;
- Preference will be given to community groups which are prepared to be flexible with dates and available at relatively short notice.

It is possible that we could be asked to offer other products – say eggs and bacon. Personally, I could handle that, as long as we have additional cooking plates. If so, we could have two people cooking, with 2/3 people on preparation and sales duties. I need to compile a core team of volunteers for 'sausage sizzle duties', plus a backup that I can rely on when 'first team players' are unavailable. Can you all please give this serious consideration and advise me of your future availability – by phone, email, or face-to-face. Can you also advise willingness to provide transport for equipment and food etc., plus whether you would be prepared to cook?

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

We welcome Rhonda Cooper as a new member of the Historical Society. Rhonda brings administrative and customer service skills (book selling!!) to the Museum. Currently, Rhonda is examining our filing system and sourcing other organisations, to whom we can on-donate any second-hand books which we have been unable to sell in the Book Emporium.

A REQUEST FROM THE EDITOR

As mentioned in the last issue of Pastimes, I would like to 'pass the baton' as Editor of the Newsletter. If you are interested in taking on this role, please contact me. Briefly, the Editor has responsibility for:

- Compiling newsworthy events which have a direct impact on the Museum (with photographs to support them);
- Sourcing and editing articles of local historical interest; and
- Printing and distribution of each issue of the newsletter (every 8 – 10 weeks).

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AND FINALLY..... a few Museum jokes!!!!

My favorite museum when I was growing up, the one that influenced me the most, was the Kit Carson Museum. It was really impressive because right away when you walked in what you saw was this case with two human skulls in it, dramatically presented. One skull was larger and had a label stating "The Skull of Kit Carson." That was really something. Then, to the side, there was this smaller skull with a label that said "The Skull of Kit Carson as a Boy"...

Sherlock Holmes & Watson go to a Rock Museum. They walk around for a while when Watson notices that there is a rock that doesn't have a display name. "What kind of rock is that?" he asked Sherlock. "Sedimentary, my dear Watson!"

Visiting the modern art museum, a lady turned to an attendant standing nearby. "This," she said, "I suppose, is one of those hideous representations you call modern art?" "No, madam," replied the attendant. "That one's called a mirror."

'I went to the museum where they had all the heads and arms from the statues that are in all the other museums.'

Key dates to note: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 11.30am, Saturday 1st August 2015 – Annual General Meeting at the Community Centre.• Annual Subscription due by end of June 2015: single \$15, couple \$25 (current prices, but subject to revision). Chris Ruszala – Editor (email stories or anecdotes to me at caruszala@bigpond.com)	Can YOU: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Build things• Make things• Restore things• Research things• Talk about things. Or do you just have an interest in our towns, our history and our cemeteries? Drop us a line at: b.baymuseum@optusnet.com.au
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