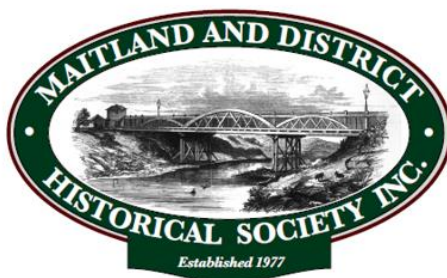


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COVID-19 **NEWSLETTER** N^o 51

31 May 2023

Maitland Art Gallery (MRAG) recently hosted the 2023 Maitland Portrait Prize on behalf of *Maitland Region Society of Artists*. The “Sitter” on this occasion was our Patron, Dr Cameron Archer AM.

I thought that perhaps it was time our membership heard a little about Cameron and his formidable list of achievements:

The *Maitland Mercury* provided the following profile:

Dr Archer is best known in Maitland as the principal of Tocal Agricultural College, a position he held for 28 years.

He grew up near Yass and knew from an early age he wanted to pursue a career in agriculture.

He and his wife Jean lived in Darwin for a time, where Dr Archer worked in the tropics as an agronomist.

In 1974 their home was destroyed by Cyclone Tracy and they were both trapped under the rubble for some time before freeing themselves.

The following year they moved to Paterson, after Dr Archer was offered a teaching position at Tocal Agricultural College.

He became principal in 1987 and held that position until retirement in 2015.

During his time at Tocal Dr Archer contributed significantly to the advancement of the college through resource and program development.

Dr Archer's involvement with the Tocal Field Days helped shaped the event into what it is today.

Dr Archer is president of the Paterson Historical Society, patron of the Maitland Historical Society and was a key figure in the conservation of notable buildings throughout Paterson, Tocal and Belgenny Farm at Camden.

He has authored and co-authored many books detailing the area's history and completed a PhD with University of Newcastle in 2008 on the environmental history of the Paterson Valley.

In 2013 Dr Archer was awarded an Order of Australia medal (AM) for his services to agricultural education and heritage conservation.

This profile is complimented by the Primary Industries Education Foundation (PIEFA) website. Cameron is Chair of PIEFA.



Dr Archer is a leading agricultural educator and former Principal of Tocal College (NSW Department of Primary Industries), former Conjoint Professor, University of Newcastle, School of Environmental and Life Sciences, and holds several Board positions including Chair, Dungog Regional Tourism Inc.; Member, CB Alexander Foundation and Trustee, Australian Wool Education Trust and is involved in a number of local organisations. He was a former Chair, Belgenny Farm Trust; Board Member, Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Foundation and a Board Member Regional Development Australia-Hunter. In 2013 Dr Archer was awarded a medal (AM) in the Order of Australia for services to agricultural education and heritage conservation.

The *Maitland Mercury* continues his story:

Maitland Portrait Prize 2023 is on exhibition at Maitland Regional Art Gallery

By [Chloe Coleman](#)



Maitland Region Society of Artists treasurer Jenny Dimmock with some of this year's Maitland Portrait Prize artworks of Dr Cameron Archer. Picture by Peter Lorimer.

Now in its sixth year, the Maitland Portrait Prize competition has once again shown the outstanding quality of Hunter artists.

The prize, run by Maitland Region Society of Artists, is on exhibition at Maitland Regional Art Gallery from Thursday, May 25 at 3pm to Sunday, June 4.

Note: This means you can still see it ...

Judging, which will be conducted by Newcastle portrait artist Pablo Tapia, will be finalised ahead of the opening event on Thursday, May 25 at 3pm at the gallery, and prizes will be awarded at 4pm.

For the first time, a high school student section has been added, with young artists from Hunter Valley Grammar School, Singleton High School, St Joseph's College Lochinvar, St Bede's College Chisholm, All Saints College and Merewether High School trying their luck.

There are 43 portraits in this year's competition, and the subject is Dr Cameron Archer AM, former Tocal Agricultural College principal of 28 years.

Every year a different Maitland identity is the subject of the prize.

Maitland Region Society of Artists treasurer Jenny Dimmock said this year's paintings are all very impressive.

"It's all high quality," she said.



This year's Maitland Portrait Prize sitter, Dr Cameron Archer, photographed by The Mercury ahead of receiving his Member of the Order of Australia medal in 2013. Picture by Ryan Osland.

Sittings for the portraits were conducted on March 23 and 25, and the student sitting was a workshop tutored by Jane Lander.

"Jane Lander took them in hand and told them all about their materials and then went into how to produce a good portrait," Ms Dimmock said.

"She was really fantastic for the kids, I learned a few things just listening to them."

Prizes will be awarded for winner, second and highly commended in both the adult and student sections.

I can report that the competition has been *run and won* and the winner is:



First Prize:

“Wonder” by Josiecar Guterres

I don’t pretend to be an art critic or artistic at all but it would be fair to say the winner is not the one that I would have picked. That said, it is an excellent facial likeness

A bit like the Archibald Prize I reckon. I’m on the side of the “Packers” ...

~~~~~

On Sunday last we held another very successful BBQ at Bunnings. Whilst the weather was fine the wind was cold and bitter. Many thanks to the members who helped out. The BBQ raised \$1,348 after expenses were deducted – a great result.

~~~~~

Finally, it seems that we are presently experiencing a wave of COVID infections. My son and his family who live in Newcastle have all been infected in the past week. I picked up a grandson from school last Thursday so have been testing myself daily since. To date all’s well

Getting accurate statistics has become problematical in that it is obvious that many countries, Australia included, are no longer requiring people to register infections.

That said, the NSW Department of Health continues to monitor hospital admissions and deaths. As at today's date there are presently 1,366 persons in hospital from Covid with 34 in ICU. The most disturbing statistic is that 69 persons in NSW have lost their lives to Covid in the past 7 days.

6,962 lives have been lost in NSW since the pandemic began.

~~~~~

**The Cultural Hub** is still bubbling away. If you get a chance, let your Councillors know how desperately we need this facility!

~~~~~

Society Treasurer, Jennifer Buffier is our Guest Speaker evening on Tuesday next. Following is the advertising spiel for Jennifer:

Jennifer Buffier to be Maitland Historical Society's June guest speaker

The speaker at the June meeting of the Maitland and District Historical Society will be Jennifer Buffier who will address the question **'Did worldwide motorcycle speedway start in Maitland on 15 December 1923?'** Her talk will begin at 5.30pm on Tuesday, 6 June at the Society's Rooms, 3 Cathedral St, Maitland.

The 'Electric Light Carnival' event that took place at the Maitland Showground on Saturday, 15 December 1923 is regarded by some as having been the birth of speedway worldwide, though some speedway enthusiasts dispute the statement. In this talk Jennifer will examine bike racing events leading up to this one as well as the December event itself. She will also discuss the part Johnnie S Hoskins played in Maitland and outside it in speedway events, the safety of riders, bike modifications, Showground modifications, accidents and related matters.

Jennifer is a Maitland-born accountant, a long-term member of the Maitland Historical Society and currently its Treasurer.

Society members and members of the general public are welcome to attend this talk. There is no need to book beforehand, but the Society asks attendees for a \$5 donation to cover the costs of supper (sandwiches, cakes, biscuits, tea and coffee) before and after the talk.

~~~~~

I had cause yesterday to have a meeting yesterday with Judy Jaeger, the Group Manager Culture, Community and Recreation Culture at Council, together with a lady who is a descendant of Edward Danny Day. She inquired about a silver entrée dish that was donated by her family to Council (the Gaol), concerned that it may have disappeared off the radar.

I am pleased to report that not only does the Gaol still have the dish; if you'll pardon the pun "under lock and key", they have the digitised story on a web site managed by Museums and Galleries NSW called *The Story Place*. The link to the story is below but for those digitally challenged the story follows:

<https://collections.maitland.nsw.gov.au/objects/6803/silver-entree-dish>

The Edward Denny Day silver-plated entrée dish was part of a set of silverware, used as a presentation gift to the one-time Police Magistrate of Maitland, Merton and Muswell Brook (sic) in February 1841. The dish is inscribed with the appreciation of 'some residents of Scone as a testimonial of admiration of the promptitude and gallantry he displayed in following and capturing a band of Bushrangers'. The band of bushrangers was 'The Jew Boy Gang'.

Edward Denny Day, as the Police Magistrate of Maitland, laid the foundation stone of the Gaol on 16 February 1844 and was an influential businessman and played a major part in the public life of Maitland, having much to do with the construction and early operation of the Gaol and of justice within the Maitland area during the mid-1800s.

The dish remained in the hands of the family of Edward Denny Day until 2010 when it was donated to Maitland Gaol, the gaol collection being of significance to the Maitland area and Edward Denny Day of considerable influence on the early history of Maitland Gaol.

### ***OBJECT DETAIL***

#### **Significance**

Edward Denny Day was a significant Maitland citizen and public official of the early to mid-1800s and had considerable influence over the law and order of the Hunter Region. Following a military career which included a posting in India as a lieutenant in the 62nd Regiment, he resigned due to ill health and came to Sydney where he undertook several government positions and was eventually appointed Police Magistrate in Maitland in January 1837 and Muswellbrook in October 1837. He became particularly known as the leader of the party of mounted police who, under the instructions of Governor Sir George Gipps, arrested a party of white men who had killed at least twenty-eight Indigenous inhabitants of Myall Creek on the Liverpool Plains, eleven of the perpetrators being caught, tried, and found guilty, with seven being hanged. The incident becoming known as 'The Myall Creek Massacre'.



The event for which this item was presented to Edward Denny Day was the pursuit and arrest of 'The Jew Boy Gang' of bushrangers. It was gifted in February 1841 by a group of residents of Scone and the item remained in the Day family until it was donated to Maitland Gaol in 2010.

After being appointed Police Magistrate at Maitland in 1837, Day became a significant public figure and represented the Government on many occasions. Most significantly for Maitland Gaol he chaired the public meeting on 16 October 1843 which adopted the petition to the Legislative Council calling for the Gaol at East Maitland to be 'proceeded with at once' and he subsequently laid the foundation stone on 16 February 1844. He continued in his high-profile position of Police Magistrate until 1848, laying the foundation stone of the new Hospital in Maitland in January 1846 and becoming its first President. He also became a foundation member of the Australian Immigration Association and was elected chairman of the Maitland branch. His business interests failed in 1848 and he returned to Sydney the next year but eventually returned to Maitland as Stipendiary Magistrate in 1858 and served here until his retirement in 1869.

While the particular item is not directly related to Maitland Gaol, its provenance and association with Edward Denny Day, the Police Magistrate at Maitland during the final development of Maitland Gaol and his later ongoing association with the site makes the item of high significance for the region and appropriate for inclusion in the Maitland Gaol Collection. Day's involvement in public law and order and his significant association with Maitland Gaol make him an important and integral component of the history of Maitland Gaol.

Statement of Significance completed by Gordon Sauber, 2022.



**Collection type**

Maitland Gaol

**Media**

Silver plated

**Measurements**

part a. 4.4 x 33.3 x 25.5cm

part b. 10.1 x 28 x 20cm

**Signature & date**

Inscription on lid face, "PRESENTED  
TO E.D Day Esqre Police Magistrate

of Maitland by some residents on the district of Scone as a testimonial of their admiration of the promptitude and gallantry in following & capturing a band of Bushrangers which had for some months infested (sic) the district of the Hunter. Feb'y 1841.

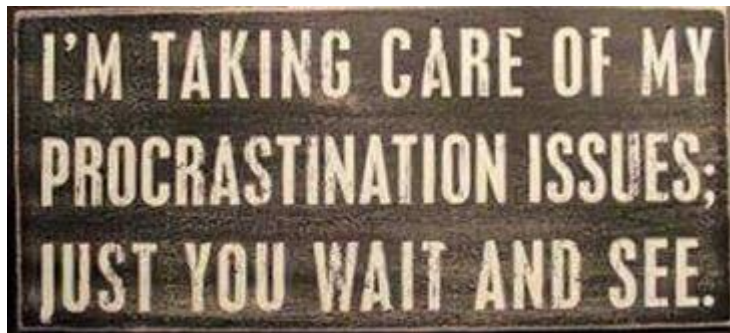
**Credit line**

Donated by Donald Norman Bell and Una Mae Farley on behalf of the family of E. D. Day, 2010.

I guess this explains to any 'doubters' why we need a suitable exhibition space; Who knows, maybe we can call it a '**Museum**'?



Every now and then something funny comes across my desk ....



Until next time .... Stay safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "K. Short", written in a cursive style.

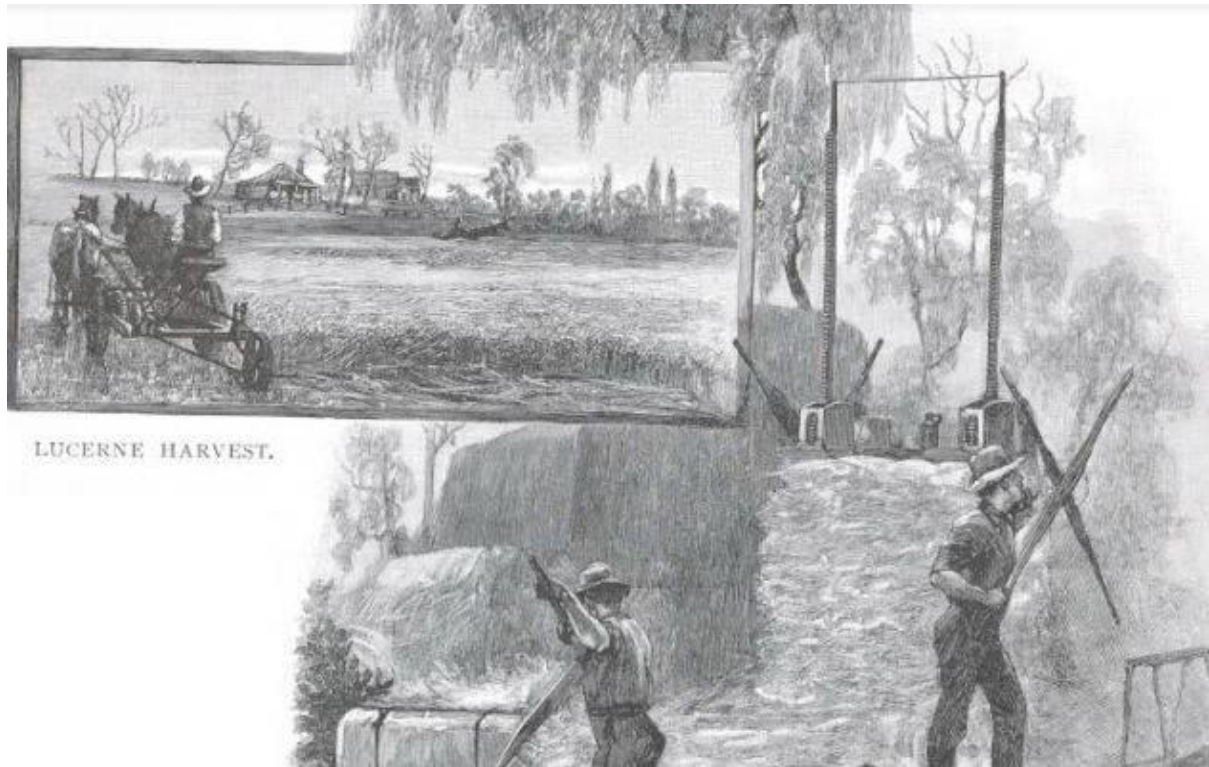
Kevin Short  
President



# How lucerne came to be in the Lower Hunter

By Cameron Archer

**Updated** July 10 2022 at 3:14pm, first published July 7 2022 at 10:26am



HARVEST: The harvesting of lucerne (A Garran, ed. Picturesque Atlas of Australasia, Picturesque Publishing Company, Sydney, c1888, Vol 1 p 102).

Lucerne, also known as alfalfa, is the closest nature has gone to providing a money tree.

As an agronomist it is by far my favourite plant.

Lucerne was originally found only in the Middle East, evolving in the hot dry Middle Eastern River valleys the Tigris and Euphrates.

These valleys have deep soils with a water table at depth, so lucerne with its deep roots evolved suited to these conditions.

It is a perennial plant meaning it stays around from year to year, shooting back after cutting or grazing- hence my analogy with the money tree.

Lucerne is a legume, meaning it can make its own protein without needing nitrogen from the soil.

Special bacteria called rhizobia live in the roots and take nitrogen from the air into the plant to enable it to grow and create protein.

In ideal growing conditions with good management a lucerne plant can last for many years.

Crops like wheat cannot do this as they need soil nitrogen to grow and produce protein.

It seems that lucerne gradually replaced wheat as the main field crop on the Lower Hunter River flats during the latter part of the nineteenth century.

In fact, a special industry was created, with Maitland's lucerne feeding Sydney's suburban dairy industry.

Before modern dairy farming as we know it existed, small dairies operated in the suburbs with feed being brought in daily to the cows.

Maitland's lucerne was the cow's fare.

The rich river flats which grew lucerne so well were adjacent to the tidal and navigable Hunter River so the local lucerne could be easily loaded onto boats and taken to Haymarket in Sydney.

Farmers pressed it into large square bales not dissimilar to the round ones you see today.

They would easily fit into a dray to be transported from Haymarket to the suburban dairy.

Special presses were designed and built locally, powered either by hand or through a special gear system that was also locally designed and built. The largest manufacturer was Duncan Sim and Sons of Morpeth.

The large hay sheds hugging the riverbanks are an enduring legacy of Maitland's special lucerne industry.

The industry existed in this form for over 80 years, with rail transport eventually replacing shipping.

The railway line to Morpeth was a great advantage to lucerne growers with a train leaving every afternoon to get lucerne to market the next morning.

Most of the lucerne was cut and baled without drying so it had to be used within a few days of arrival to Sydney.

Local farmers were very innovative.

Edward King of Woodville, for example, purchased an imported mowing machine by 1860 - one not dissimilar to those used today.

Others soon followed and machines gradually replaced man power.

The suburban dairies quickly disappeared after World War II and all milk was brought in from outlying and country dairy farms.

Maitland's lucerne growing continued, becoming more mechanised each year so today the lucerne is never touched by human hands, just machines.

Lucerne remains as an important crop, especially for horses and as a drought reserve.

# From Lochinvar to Singleton - The Great Northern Railway reaches Upper Hunter

By Lawrie Henderson  
July 17 2022



PROGRESS: The railway to Singleton, pictured, was to be opened on St Patrick's Day, 17 March, 1863.

The Great Northern Railway was pushing inland.

The section to Lochinvar was opened by the Chief Commissioner of Railways on Wednesday, 27 June 1863 and public traffic began on Monday 2, July.

The opening was a low-key affair but many residents of Lochinvar assembled at the station to welcome the first train.

Cuttings through rock at Harpers Hill were formidable and a viaduct was constructed to cross the Black Creek floodplain.

The line from Singleton toward Maitland had commenced and by 10 April, 1862, ballasting of that part of the line had begun. By 22 April, trains were running as far as Branxton and on 13 May tenders were called for the construction of a goods shed at Branxton station.

By 24 May, 350 men were employed on building the railway according to the Maitland Mercury.

The railway to Singleton was to be opened on St Patrick's Day, 17 March, 1863 but heavy rains and flooding in February affected the line and the need for repairs delayed the opening.

By 5 March, considerable progress had been made on the building of Singleton Railway Station and the goods shed was expected to be completed in three months.



RAILWAY: The section to Lochinvar was opened by the Chief Commissioner of Railways on June 27, 1863.

Finally, the opening was scheduled for Thursday, 7 May, 1863 and it was accordingly arranged to invite the Governor to take part in the ceremonies.

On the appointed day, the Governor, his Excellency the Right Honourable Sir John Young, Baronet, and his party arrived in Newcastle on the steamer Coonanbara early in the morning. His Excellency was met by was the Major of Newcastle,

Mr RT Bishop and other gentlemen, and at 8am was entertained at a public breakfast in the Court House attended by about sixty dignitaries. Lady Young was unable to attend, but Lord John Taylor, Mr Turville, Mr Cowper, Mr Arnold and Mr Whitton, Chief Engineer of Railways, made up the official party. After the obligatory speeches and replies, the party boarded the train to Singleton with stops at East Maitland and West Maitland where His Excellency was presented with numerous loyal and complimentary addresses to which he replied.

The train arrived in Singleton at about 11 o'clock, greeted by a dense crowd of people assembled on the platform.

Mr Loder's carriage conveyed His Excellency to the Royal Hotel accompanied by the West Maitland, Morpeth, East Maitland and Newcastle Volunteer Rifle Companies.

On arrival at the hotel, His Excellency was greeted by a contingent of Mounted Police, under the command of Inspector Walker.

Entertainment by the Rifle Company's bands pleased the crowds and the celebrations ended in the evening with a fireworks display and a ball. In the meantime, a road/rail bridge was under construction across the Hunter and the line was proceeding toward Liddell. The railway was to reach Wallangarra on the Queensland border in 1888.

The bridge across the Hawkesbury River, linking the GNR to Sydney, was completed in 1889.