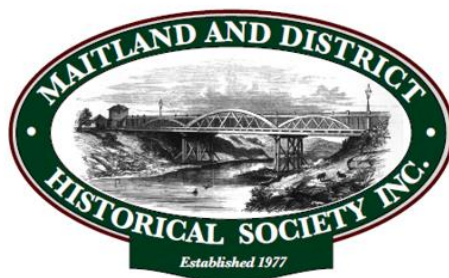


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# COVID-19 **NEWSLETTER** N<sup>o</sup> 52

## 30 June 2023

The highlight of our activities in the last month has undoubtedly been Heritage Fest. Now in its third year, this was the first occasion the weather has been agreeable, and everyone responded accordingly. To date I have only heard positive comments.



Janece (McDonald) and her organising committee are to be congratulated.

They (the committee) have looked critically at what's 'worked' in the past and at ways to improve content, presentation and participation.

There were additional 'trades' represented this year viz: a blacksmith & a leatherworker.

I especially liked (as did the children) the home-made games from generations past. And it wasn't just the kids who were trying to throw the washer in the air and catch it on a stick.

It was also evident that the stall

holders had a successful day too. Again, reports to me were that they all traded most profitably, as did the food outlets. The provision of tables and chairs alongside the cake stall (sold out mid-morning) and the sausage sizzle was very much appreciated by patrons.

In addition to the Church Street site on Sunday, the Recital at Sun Studios, the official dinner, the Heritage Walks and the tours of 'Toll & Bridge Houses' were well patronised and enjoyed.

There are any number of members to thank for their assistance at our stall, as well and the tour guides and of course Bruce Marich for kindly including his home.

I guess we'll just have to wait until next year !



Bridge House (circa 1839)



The fun of the Fayre

~~~~~

A couple of things ....

There's still been no substantive news on the adaptive reuse of the 'old' Council administration building. I understand that last Tuesday week, Councillors received a 'briefing' from Council staff with respect to their (the staff's) view on what they believe should happen to the building, and whilst not knowing other than anecdotally,

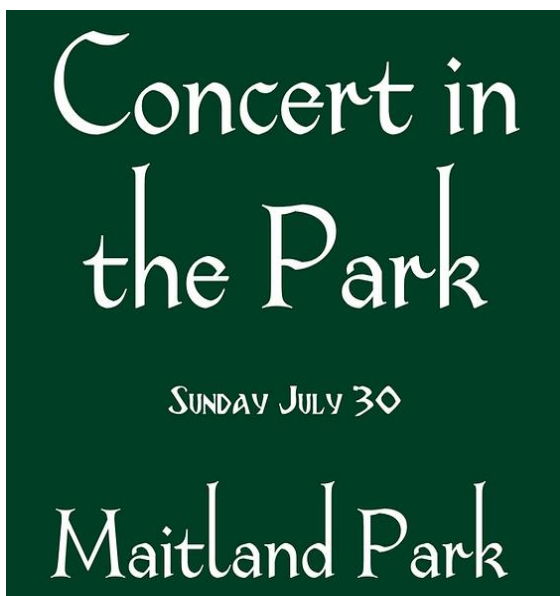


my understanding is that the staff have been further 'instructed', presumably because the 'advice' provided to councillors, didn't coincide their requirements – draw from that as you will ....

What I can say, is that in private conversations I have had with the majority of councillors, they understand the dire circumstances the various historical and community groups have, especially with respect to the storage of collections and exhibition space.

.... and for what it's worth, both the Seniors Citizens building and the Maitland Park Bowling Club may well provide a broader perspective.

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The other 'thing' on the agenda is that our Committee has agreed to participate in *Maitland Pipes & Drums*, 'Concert in the Park', a day to celebrate Celtic culture. I guess this means you'll have to dust off your kilt and sporran and if its anything like the past couple of weeks, a plaid wouldn't be out of place.

Either way, come along and enjoy.



and COVID ....

.... and you thought I'd forgotten to give you an update didn't you?

Not so, although one thing is certain, even governments have become accepting of the ongoing situation, even to the point that some are either no longer keeping statistics or at the very least, are being very reticent in releasing them.

Great Britain for example, has not registered a Covid infection since early June. Likewise, they have had no deaths attributed to the virus in that time.

Australia too has become complacent, and my best guess is that only a fraction of infections are being registered with the health authorities. Despite this, NSW Heath has been keeping statistics that clearly show the 'problem' has not gone away. 85 deaths have been attributed to Covid in NSW in the last seven days and 31 remain in intensive care, another 1,288 in hospital.

These ratios have remained pretty constant all year, mid-January recording an almost identical ratio with 20<sup>th</sup> January showing 1,236 in hospital and another 31 in ICU. In all, New South Wales has attributed 7,245 deaths to the virus since the pandemic began ... a sobering statistic?

..... and this month's funnies !

The new Gravy Boat I found at Grandpa's ...



**I see people my age out there,  
running triathlons, climbing  
mountains, bungee jumping and  
all sorts of outrageous things ...**

**... and here I am, feeling good  
about myself because I got my  
leg through my underwear  
without falling over!**

Until next time .... Stay safe.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Short'.

Kevin Short  
President

# The sights, sounds and smells of East Maitland 100 years ago

By Chas Keys  
July 24 2022



*MEMOIRS: Arthur Gow wrote a memoir about the place he recalled from his youth - that place was East Maitland.*

East Maitland's history has not been written up in as much detail as the former West Maitland's has been, but every now and then a precious unpublished piece of the East's rich story appears.

In 1979 a life-long local resident, Arthur Gow (1904-84), wrote a memoir about the place he recalled from his youth. In it he described East Maitland as it was from about 1910 to the mid-1920s.

None of the streets were sealed. They were surfaced with blue metal brought in by train along with sandstone gravel from nearby One Mile Gully quarry and broken up by council workmen with sledgehammers, spread out and flattened with a heavy steamroller. Only the busy streets were gravelled: the rest were dirt tracks. Footpaths were bare earth or grass between the roads and the houses. Kerbing and guttering was still in the future.

Cars were few before the WWI. Arthur remembered the first one he saw, a bright red number owned by a Hunter coal baron. He and his schoolmates lined up to watch it drive past! Only main thoroughfares (like Lawes, Melbourne and Newcastle streets) had gas lighting. At dusk, a council employee on a bike or a horse would light each lamp atop a post about 12-15 feet (roughly 4-5 metres) high. He carried a long pole with a crook and a lighted oily rag on it. The gas was turned on with the crook and then lit from the rag. At daylight next morning another council man would do the rounds to turn off the gas which came from local coal burnt at the council's gas works on the corner of Banks and Brisbane streets.

Houses burned wood or coal for heating. On still winter mornings, smoke curled from each chimney. The air must have been far from clean. When there were atmospheric temperature inversions the smell of smoke would have been unpleasantly strong.

Nevertheless, despite the air pollution, there was bird life in abundance from tiny jenny and blue wrens to big white cockatoos. There were finches, willie wagtails, robin redbreasts, magpies, pee wees, hawks, crows, galahs, parrots, parakeets and rosellas. Especially in the many small areas of bush, they made a deafening cacophony of sounds.

There were the sounds of human activity, too, men working with horses and tip drays as they carted soil or gravel. Then there were the rattling trams, which plied between East Maitland and West from 1909 to 1926, and the trains.

The smells were not only those associated with burning coal and wood. Some came from the sanitary service run by a Mr Troy, a council employee, who parked his carts in his back yard at the corner of Victoria and Rous streets. He used tar liberally to quell the stench, though not always successfully.

One day, Arthur recalled, Mr Troy dropped a full pan in Victoria St. He calmly picked up its contents with his bare hands, loaded the refilled pan onto the cart and wiped his hands on his horse's tail! The like of that is no longer seen anywhere in the streets of Maitland!

**Developed from Arthur John Gow: 'Early East Maitland' (1979, unpublished memoir)**

I know, I shouldn't but I have ...

How does the moon cut his  
hair?

Eclipse it.

What did Baby Corn say to  
Mama Corn?

Where's Pop Corn?

What do you call a  
Frenchman wearing thongs?

Philippe Flop.

I hate my job—all I do is  
crush cans all day.

It's soda pressing.



# East Maitland - when two-storey houses were the homes of the well-to-do

By Chas Keys



LANDMARK: The Wright family gathered at the front gate of Chadlington - a substantial slate roofed brick building at East Maitland.

Arthur Gow (1904-84) left a fascinating memoir of life in East Maitland early last century. He described the lives that people lived, the local economy and people he knew. His account is one of a mode of living - very different from what we know in East Maitland today.

Take the reticulation of services, for example. Basically, there was very little of it. Water came from rain, harvested from roofs, collected in above-ground tanks and used for drinking and cooking. The overflow went to wells for the purposes of washing and bathing.

There was no sewerage piping, and not many septic tanks. Pan service to outhouses was the rule, nightsoil collected in pans by council employees and ploughed into a paddock at Rathluba.

Domestic lighting was by kerosene lamps: few houses had gas from the East Maitland Council's gas plant in Banks Street. For heating, coal and wood were burnt. There was no reticulated electricity until 1922.

There were some substantial houses, including Chadlington on Newcastle Road between Victoria and Burg streets. This was a two-storey brick building with a spire and modelled on an English gentleman's residence. Two-storey houses were few and always the homes of the well-to-do. Cars, likewise, were uncommon and only owned by the better off, as were horse-drawn sulkies.

There was another end to the housing scale, of course. In the many patches of remnant bush and along the railway line, people lived in shacks cobbled together from timber and old iron. Some of their building materials were scavenged from the local rubbish tip.

In 1920 about 8000 people lived in East Maitland. In Metford, Tenambit, Ashtonfield, Greenhills and Rathluba there was scattered housing. Some kept a cow in a paddock near the house. Milking them was a chore that often fell to children.

Houses had no refrigerators, just cooling 'safes' with sugar sacks draped around the sides with a large flat tray on the top filled with water. Flannel strips placed in the tray and over the bags soaked the bags and kept the food cool inside.

Kids played in the streets, quite safe with few cars and only horses, carts and drays to be wary of. Vacant lots and the bush were also favoured areas for play. Billy goat racing was popular in cleared areas in the bush, goats being harnessed to carts like small trotting gigs with bicycle wheels. There were games of football and cricket on vacant lots, too. School and Sunday School picnics were much looked forward to.

But there's more ...

*The difference between a  
numerator and a denominator  
is a short line.*

*Only a fraction of people will  
understand this.*

What's Forrest Gump's  
password?

1forrest1.

*My friend was showing me his  
tool shed and pointed to a  
ladder.*

*"That's my stepladder," he  
said.*

*"I never knew my real  
ladder."*