

President:

Kevin Short OAM

Patron:

Dr Cameron Archer AM

Web: www.maitlandhistorical.org**Secretary:**

Steve Bone

AddressPO Box 333
MAITLAND NSW 2320**Phone:**

0468 438 990

Email: maitlandhistorical@gmail.com

ABN: 96 156 309 595

COVID-19 **NEWSLETTER** N^o 55

30 September 2023

Credit where credit's due Council doesn't often get it right but I think on this occasion we need to congratulate them.

You might recall that back in late January, early February, the Jewish Cemetery at Louth Park was vandalised with swastikas in what was a deliberate, anti-semitic attack.

You don't just happen upon Maitland's Jewish Cemetery by chance; it is isolated and difficult to find.

In fact, it was one of our Society's members on a personal discovery tour who uncovered the vandalism and advised both the Police and Council. It is so isolated that we can't even be sure as to when the vandalism actually occurred.

Maitland in the nineteenth century had a substantial Jewish presence. Members were very much involved in Maitland's commercial and social life; they contributed to the broader community through philanthropy and direct personal involvement. One only needs to look at the 'Honour Board' at Benhorne to see how involved the Jewish Community was in the welfare of the city and its citizens.

You might also recall the excellent publication by Maitland Council from a few years ago, authored by member Janis Wilton and in which each of those interred in the cemetery were eulogised as best as the historic record allowed.

It is titled: *Maitland Jewish Cemetery: A Monument To Dreams And Deeds* and is available for sale through the Society.

The article on the following page was published on 9th February in the *Australian Jewish News* and is repeated verbatim although there are a couple of slight errors in that I personally counted 16 headstones that had swastikas stencilled on them and one where the headstone had been pushed over. The last interment was also in 2010, not 2000 as stated.

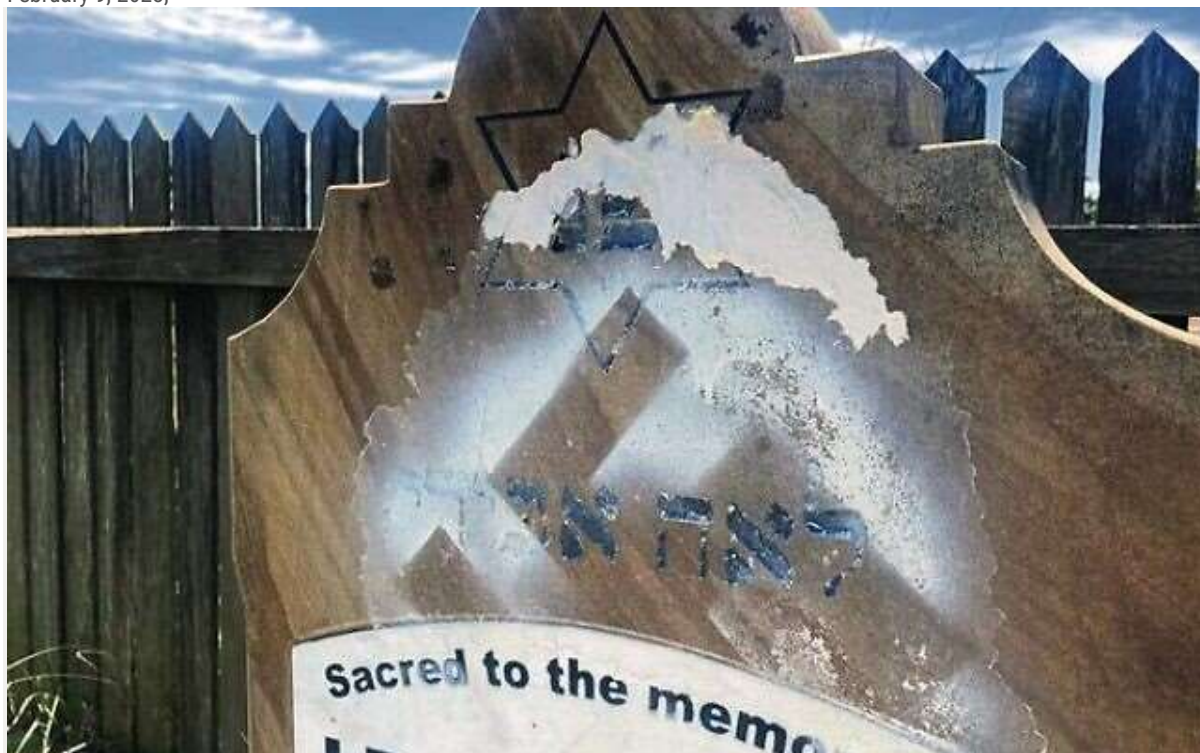
SUSPECTED HATE CRIME

Jewish headstones vandalised

'This was not some random action. It was a planned and deliberate attack on Jewish graves only.'

By [CARLY ADNO](#)

February 9, 2023,



Ten Jewish headstones were vandalised at the South Maitland cemetery in Newcastle, NSW. Photo: Twitter.

"Why are we Jews so hated and will the hatred ever end?", asked child Holocaust survivor and community stalwart Nina Bassat.

"Those questions came into fine focus last week with the desecration of 10 Jewish graves at the Maitland cemetery."

Police are appealing for information after the headstones at the Hunter region cemetery in NSW were spray-painted with stencilled Nazi swastikas in what is a suspected hate crime.

Established in 1846, the South Maitland cemetery is the earliest dedicated Jewish cemetery in NSW. There was one burial there in 2000, but it ceased operations in 1940.

It is located in the middle of four fields and can only be accessed by travelling down a long, grassy and muddy road.

"This was not some random action," Bassat told the AJN.

"It was a planned and deliberate attack on Jewish graves only. One can only weep at such wanton, specific and targeted hatred, and hope that the Newcastle Jewish community confronts it with strength and dignity."

Police said a crime scene was established and a number of items were seized, which will be forensically examined.

Rabbi Yossi and Malki Rodal of the Hunter Chabad told The AJN they are planning to visit the cemetery on Sunday, which Rabbi Rodal said is in desperate need of general upkeep, while Maitland Council has applied a white cleaning substance to the headstones.

Rabbi Rodal had never experienced any antisemitism in the region, but this incident comes after the synagogue in the same area was found graffitied last month.

"In our area it's so friendly and beautiful," Rabbi Rodal said.

"It's actually brought out the best in the Jewish community, with everyone getting together and rallying around. We're proud to be Jewish and these people are doing the wrong thing, but it will only strengthen our resolve to add lightness to the darkness."

NSW Jewish Board of Deputies (JBD) CEO Darren Bark said: "Vandalised Jewish gravestones were occurrences we witnessed in the Nazi era. To see these vile displays on headstones and commemorations of loved ones that have passed is deeply distressing and concerning.

"There is no place in our society for this terrible symbol. It is our collective responsibility to speak up against and call out this hate, wherever it appears. Those that commit such



Maitland Council has applied a white cleaning substance to the headstones, which will be removed in two weeks. Photo: Twitter.

Chairman of the Anti-Defamation Commission Dvir Abramovich said the “hate-filled” attack is an affront to the Jewish community at large.

“This is part of a disturbing surge in antisemitism in our nation, and we can imagine the hurt and revulsion that this evil crime has caused to the families of those buried in the cemetery,” Abramovich said.

“This desecration sends a clear message that there is still much work to do in the fight against neo-Nazism, extremism and prejudice.”

The incident occurred the same week the Executive Council of Australian Jewry (ECAJ) released its annual Report on Antisemitism in Australia, revealing a 40 per cent increase in antisemitism incidents over the last two years.

The last of the above photos, along with others, were published in local and national press and show the poultice used by the ‘cleaners’ to remove the graffiti.

So, why do we need to congratulate Council. I for one had ‘grave doubts’ (yes, the pun is intended) as to whether the poultice used would work. I’m please to say that the final outcome has been excellent:

The first of the following photographs of more or less the same graves shows the initial vandalism, the second shows the poultice whilst the third, the final outcome.





The results are outstanding. The poultice even cleaned off the dirt and grime, as evidenced on the furthest away of the headstones. (the one with the 'top-knot')

The headstone alongside as featured in the *Australian Jewish News* article, and in which the cleaning process very evident.

This particular grave caused a great deal of debate in 2010 when Leah Abadee was interred, the first interment since 1940.

By coincidence, I made mention of this interment when writing about Maitland's Jewish Community in the (NSW) Freemason. The following edition, another subscriber commented that the lady in question was his great aunt and that he had attended the funeral and subsequent burial. It's a small world ...

~~~~~

## What else have we been up to?

### Bunnings BBQ's

Another very successful BBQ at Bunnings where over \$1,600 was raised to help ease the financial burden. Although there are obviously a number of members who contribute to the success of these BBQ's, I don't think I can overstate the vote of thanks we owe to Secretary Steve. He does all the purchasing and general organising. Thanks mate, it is appreciated.

### Holbeach Lochinvar – State Heritage Register

Members Allan and Lisa Thomas' home at Lochinvar (Holbeach) has recently been added to the State Heritage Register. It was originally built by Henry Nowland as a Coach House on the Great North Road, the coaches predating 'Cobb and Co' by a decade. It is one of the few remaining Georgian buildings substantially unaltered.

NBN Television recently did a podcast and can be viewed from their website, or this link:

<https://www.nbnnews.com.au/2023/09/16/rare-relics-uncovered-at-lochinvar-coach-house/>.

An article also appeared in the Newcastle Weekly which can be read at [nowlands-lochinvar-coach-house-and-setting-now-heritage-listed](#).



### Possible ABC Podcast on Arnott's buildings.

On the score of the media, I was also approached by the ABC. They too hope to do a podcast but this time on the William Arnotts' buildings at the bottom of High Street and have sought our assistance. Just maybe we can put to bed the myth that William Arnott was ever at Morpeth – let's hope



## The 'Heritage Hub' – the Old Council Admin building?

Where is it up to?

It's hard to know but the following email was received this morning from Council following last Tuesday night's Council meeting.

The encouraging part is that Councillors have at long-last realised that something **MUST** be done to preserve Maitland's rich history and provide 'space' for community groups – that said, it ain't gunna happen quickly ....

*Dear recipients,*

*"Good afternoon and thank you for your continued interest in the adaptive reuse of the former Council Administration Building at 285 High Street, Maitland.*

*At the Council meeting on 26 September 2023 Council resolved to invite the nine (9) proponents of formal proposals submitted during the EOI to enter further discussion on their operational and financial readiness to undertake an adaptive re-use and leasing of the former Council Administration Building. A report on the outcomes of these discussions is to be provided to Council by the end of 2023.*

*As an interested party to the adaptive reuse we will be inviting you now to make a detailed submission. In the EOI process you provided a high level of information but now we will require you to supply more specific information.*

*More advice will be provided to you on this process over the next two weeks, but in the meantime it is suggested that you should be ready to confirm your proposed group structure, operating model, your ability to enter into a potential lease arrangement and the terms you would be seeking. You should also be aware that any future use will require development consent so you are encouraged to familiarise yourself with the mandatory information required for your use including consideration of time and costs.*

***It would be appreciated if you could confirm that you wish to participate in the next stage of the process via return email.***

*Should you have any questions in the meantime, please reach out.*

*Kind regards,*

**Michael Rathborne**

Senior Property Advisor

Strategy, Performance & Business Systems | Maitland City Council

t 02 4939 1039

m +61 439 247 946

[Michael.Rathborne@maitland.nsw.gov.au](mailto:Michael.Rathborne@maitland.nsw.gov.au)



## Community Talks

On Friday 1<sup>st</sup> September I presented a luncheon talk to Maitland's 'Visually Impaired' group on the early history of Maitland. As you can appreciate, this was very much a 'talk', visual aids somewhat pointless.

On the subject of community groups, I have over the past few days delivered talks at Maitland Rotary and Rutherford/Telarah Probus Clubs and have several more scheduled over the next couple of weeks:

The University of the Third Age (U3A) gets under way in term 4 in the next week or so. The presenters will be Chas Keys, Mick Belcher and myself.

This group of up to 30 persons has been meeting each Wednesday at Lorn Park Bowling Club during school term, the lectures progressively telling Maitland's story from before Europeans to (hopefully) the present day. After any number of sessions, we are only up to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century – there's a way to go.

### The Next Lecture Meeting:

#### **Warren Millington to speak to Maitland Historical Society about his life in beekeeping**

The Maitland and District Historical Society's guest speaker on Tuesday, 3 October will be Warren Millington, whose topic will be **'A personal history in bees and beekeeping'**. The talk will be given at the Society's Rooms at 3 Cathedral St, Maitland, beginning at 5.30pm.

The talk will cover beekeeping as an occupation, Warren's approach to it and what it takes to be a beekeeper. He has practised the art of beekeeping in the lower Hunter at Tocal, Vacy and Largs, and further afield at Mudgee and at Thargomindah, in southern Queensland. Bulk honey production has been his occupation for most of his life. Latterly he has experienced the difficulties brought by the varroa mite which has greatly affected beekeeping in New South Wales.

Warren hails from Tarro, and from early times he was interested in farming. He began on a dairy farm near Paterson before being employed at the Agricultural College at Tocal. There his interest in bees and beekeeping took off.

Members of the Society and of the general public are most welcome to attend. There is no need to book a seat, but the Society asks for a donation of \$5 to cover the costs of supper before and after the talk.

## COVID

Where would we be without something about Covid; it was after all the reason these newsletters began.

I guess the resignation of Victorian Premier, Daniel Andrews, during the week has virtually severed that last direct link to lockdowns and self-discipline. Even the need to notify the authorities of an infection has passed; you simply can't as they closed the portal.

Whilst we've become tolerant of Covid and its implications; at last count Australia was 13<sup>th</sup> on the 'International List' of infections with almost 12 million cases

registered. The most sobering figure is the over 22,000 deaths that are attributed to the 'Virus'.

Earlier this week, the ABC warned: "The 'highly mutated COVID variant BA.2.86 – known as Pirola – has landed in Australia!"

All I can say is: *Watch this space.*

Until next time .... Stay safe.



Kevin Short  
President



Please don't "de-friend me"



and for the mathematicians

# Families forced off the land after flood of 1955

By Chas Keys  
September 4 2022



**SANDBAGS FAILED:** Sandbagging at McKimm's Corner, May 13, 1962. Picture supplied.

The levees built by the Bolwarra Embankment Committee and like groups throughout the Lower Hunter kept many floods at bay. The farmers of Bolwarra owed much to the leadership of men like Walter Worboys and Ray Vercoe, both of whom spent years on the committee's executive.

Minor floods were excluded completely from the farms and the frequency of inundation was substantially reduced: crops were lost less often and growing seasons were less prone to interruption. Roads, too, were exposed to damage less frequently, saving the local council on repair costs. Undeniably, the impacts of the embankments on the rural economy and on the financial wellbeing of the farm community were positive. There were substantial failures when the banks couldn't keep floods out of Bolwarra Flats. On those occasions the costs in lost crops and livestock were substantial.

Embankments weren't built to high engineering standards and their deficiencies were found by bigger floods such as 1893, 1913 and 1930. Failures occurred often. The damage was severe in 1949, when several hundred metres of embankment was damaged. Some sections washed away completely. This flood ushered in a period of frequent, often severe floods over the next seven years. The repetitive damage exhausted the farmers' ability to maintain their investments in maintenance and

repair. Much work was required, and most of what was done was promptly undone by the Great Flood of 1955 which was the most severe of them all.

Sandbagging was attempted as the 1955 flood rose, but it was soon abandoned as hopeless: the event that was unfolding was huge. This was understood before the flood reached its unprecedented peak height at Singleton. Serious levee breaches led to massive deposits of sand and gravel between Lorn and Flat Rd and near the site of today's Harry Boyle Bridge. These were highly damaging to farm productivity.

The 1955 flood threatened the commercial viability of the Flats, a vital supplier of food to Maitland, Newcastle, Sydney and elsewhere. Several farms lost houses and sheds along with crops and livestock. Some families were forced out of agriculture altogether while others took to living on higher ground and commuting to their holdings. The resident population of the flats was much reduced after 1955. Exhausted both emotionally and financially, the remaining farmers were ready for change. This was to usher in the Department of Public Works which spent years rebuilding the banks to higher standards. These upgraded levees, with their associated spillways, were built between the late 1950s and the 1970s.



# James Wallis' impact on our convict settlement

By Chas Keys

September 11 2022



James Wallis' impact on our convict settlement

James Wallis was a career army officer who played an important part in establishing the original largely convict settlement at Wallis Plains, the site of Maitland.

He had arrived in NSW in 1814 and impressed Governor Lachlan Macquarie by leading a detachment of grenadiers in the Appin massacre. This act of reprisal against local Aborigines for killing four white settlers tarnished Macquarie's reputation and probably that of Wallis too by association.

Macquarie praised Wallis for his efforts and in June 1818 appointed him to the post of Commandant of Newcastle penal station - the only town outside the Sydney basin. The station held more than 300 convicts in a total population of more than 500. Later in 1818, Wallis journeyed with Macquarie up the Hunter River to inspect the farming settlement at Paterson's Plains which Macquarie established six years earlier. Impressed by what the convicts had achieved, Macquarie ordered that the Paterson's Plains experiment between today's Paterson and Woodville be repeated a few miles away.

On their trip, the men amused themselves by bestowing names on landscape features and districts. Macquarie named a reach of the Hunter River 'Wallis Reach', the area to the west of the Paterson River the 'Wallis District' and a tributary 'Wallis Creek'. The name 'Wallis Plains' was given to the area which Macquarie wanted 'well-behaved' convicts from Newcastle to settle and farm. Wallis chose well: the

community they built over the next few years was successful and they produced surpluses for sale or barter in Sydney and Newcastle.

Also named on Macquarie's visit were the Macquarie District (to the east of the Paterson River), the Macquarie Reach of the Hunter and the Elizabeth Reach (after the Governor's wife). Wallis suggested that a large lagoon on Wallis Plains be named Lake Lachlan after the Macquaries' son. This lake, later much reduced in size when drained to create farmland, is located in today's Louth Park.

More than 200 years on, the name Wallis Creek remains and a new estate of that name exists in Gillieston Heights. There is also a Wallis St East Maitland and a Wallis Lake near Forster.

Wallis became known during his tenure in Newcastle for the infrastructure he initiated including the original Christ Church, a convict hospital, various barrack buildings and the breakwater that linked Coal Island (later Nobbys) to the 'mainland'. Wallis was also a talented artist and many of his engravings and drawings have survived, including his famous 'Black Swans'. Wallis was congratulated by Macquarie for his service when his term in NSW ended in 1819 and he departed for a posting in India.



Who said there was no 'Man in the Moon'?