

COALFIELDS LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

Articles

| | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|----------------|----|
| Women's Role in Mining | 3 | Poem-The Poppy | 10 |
| Cabbage Tree Hats | 5 | Museum Report | 11 |
| Cedric Maudsley Ingram PEARSON | 7 | Meeting Times | 12 |
| "Jack" COPPINS | 9 | Opening Hours | 12 |

Welcome to Tumblebee, the official newsletter of the Coalfields Local History Association Inc.

Aims and Objectives

To discover, record, print, preserve and teach the History and Heritage of the specified district. The specified district being all the land situated in the Cessnock Local Government Area. Primarily known as the Hunter Valley in general

The Coalfields Local History Association Manages the Edgeworth David Museum, Manages and maintains the Jim Comerford Collection and offers assistance with Family History Research and inquiries.

Office Bearers

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Catherine PARSONS
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LIFE MEMBERS OF EDGEWORTH DAVID MUSEUM

Brian ANDREWS OAM (Deceased)
Lexie MATTHEWS
Cheryle SHOESMITH

| | |
|---------------------|--|
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|---------------------|--|

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|-------------|--|
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The affairs of the Association shall be conducted by the management committee, which includes the office bearers of the Association. Members of the association are welcome to attend and observe at any meeting and may take part at the discretion of the chairperson

3 WOMEN'S ROLE IN MINING



Women's Auxiliaries active during stay-in at Wallarah.

At the turn of the 20th Century women were expected to stay at home to maintain a well run, comfortable household for the miners to come home to after long arduous hours working underground. At times this could prove challenging, particularly if there was more than one miner in the household each on different shifts. The women had to devise a routine so each miner had a hot bath and meal to come home to.

Another challenge faced by the women was managing on a budget. Wages were not high and at times almost non-existent, such as illness or a miner being injured and unable to work. No doubt the hardest times of all were when the miners went on strike. Women did not often involve themselves with unionism, these decisions were made by the men.

On rare occasions though, especially during strikes, women did take action. One such instance was during the strikes at Bulli and Mt Keira mines in the late 1880's. In 1887 blacklegs began arriving to work the mines and along with the men, the women met them at the jetties. Holding their babies and children they pleaded with the blacklegs to go back to Sydney. On another occasion at Mt Kembla in 1890 a similar protest took place. It was not until the 1930's that the contributions made by women were recognised. During the Northern Lockout the women organised soup kitchens, school lunches and made other relief contributions. In August 1936 Cessnock woman Ethel Teerman sent a letter to *Common Cause* stating that as women "carry the greater burden in all struggles and disasters" there is a need for "organising a women's auxiliary to the Miners' Federation".

In 1938 several auxiliaries were established in the Cessnock area with the aim, as stated at its inaugural meeting, to "care for women and children in sickness and trouble, to organise sewing circles, social events, soup kitchens, sports and concerts." (Newcastle Sun August 1935).

Many men were concerned about the disruption the meetings and work of the auxiliaries to their home lives. As they preferred their women to stay at home, many wives did not join the auxiliaries. Among those who did join, with the support of her husband, was Grace Scanlon. Grace worked



National meeting of the Miners Woman's Auxiliary, Sydney 1958. Grace Scanlon front right.

tirelessly for many years establishing auxiliaries, attending meetings and helping people who were struggling .. Due to women like Grace, life for the miners and their families were made a little easier during the hard times.

Though times have changed and there are not as many auxiliaries, for almost a century women have played an important supporting role for the miners and their families.

CABBAGE TREE HATS



THE CABBAGE TREE HAT

*T'is only a rag of a cabbage-tree hat,
But no one could buy if for money:
For it speaks of day when the lean was the fat
With a taste of the salt in the honey.
For life wasn't all skittles and beer
In the years when she plaited the strand
I hold like a friend, and a precious thing, here,
In the hollow and heart of my hand.*

After an enquiry from a lady studying Cabbage Tree hats, staff at the museum were curious as to what was a cabbage tree hat? After looking through our items, low and behold! We have a Cabbage Tree hat in our collection.

This type of hat is an Australian icon and played a very significant role in the lives of colonial Australia.

The Cabbage Tree hat is made from the leaves of the Cabbage Tree palm (*Livistona australis*).

It can be imagined what a surprise it would have been for convicts and settlers coming from Britain to experience the ferocity of the Australian climate. Our hot summers with prolonged periods of sunshine not experienced in Britain.

Convicts, farmers and labourers were compelled to work in this heat, and would have suffered dearly in this unfamiliar climate.

What was the solution? Hats of course.

However, no money to buy hats, that would have been expensive even if they had been available!

No materials to manufacture conventional hats!

Again what is the answer?

The hats had to be functional (protection from the blazing sun) and durable.

“Necessity is the father of invention”

Given the sparsity of materials and the availability of the Cabbage Tree palm, the Cabbage Tree hat came into being. We must remember that convicts and settlers coming to Australia had a vast range of skills. Some inventive person must have improvised to produce these hats.

Cabbage Tree hats were made from strips from the cabbage tree palm, which were plaited into long chains, or sinnets. Starting at the centre of the crown the circles were widened outward. Then came the sides, which were blocked onto a crown shaped piece of wood and ironed into permanent shape. The brim was the next part to be made, then the lining, the band (usually black velvet or some other black material) and lastly the leather chin strap. Usually an ornamental button was sewn over the centre of the crown. The stitching at every corner, which took time was very important as it added to the greater strength and durability of the hat.

The cabbage tree palm is a hardy species and the bark is very tough. The best hands were selected and taken home where they were scalded for approximately ten minutes. Vigorous shaking caused the palm leaf to open like a fan.



These were subsequently bleached to make them as white as possible. A splitter made of a wooden haft, into which teeth like pegs were inserted and filed from stay busks (thus resembling a small rake), was used to split the leaves into narrow, equal width strands ready for plaiting.

The Cabbage Tree hat provided not only shelter from the harsh Australian sun but also industry and income when times were hard.

The Cabbage Tree hat was a fashionable, functional and familiar item worn by working men everywhere and so the manufacture of Cabbage tree hats became a lucrative cottage industry. Children plaited the sinnets on the way to school. Convicts and prisoners tended to neglect their chores to make hats, women made hats in their free time and for quite a while it was an industry that flourished and generated income for those who needed it most. At some time the Cabbage Tree hat became a symbol of disaffected youth. Young men from outlying areas came to town for a good time. They banded together and wore the hat as a statement of unity. The Australian Larrikin was born under the name of the Cabbage Tree mob.

Bushrangers Ben HALL, Johnny GILBERT and Frederick WARD (Thunderbolt) were known to be wearers of Cabbage Tree hats. Unfortunately by the 1900s the popularity of the Cabbage Tree hat was in decline. Hats had become fashion statements and much more elaborate. The introduction of shop manufactured hats deposed the good old functional Cabbage Tree hat and it drifted into history.

SOURCE
Free Settlers and Felons



BUSHRANGER BEN HAL

CEDRIC MAUDSLEY (SANDY) INGRAM PEARSON

MAJOR GENERAL – AO, OBE, MC, DSO



Rev George INGRAM-PEARSON (the father of Cedric Maudsley) was the Methodist minister at Kurri Kurri, from 1918 to 1920.

Cedric, called Sandy was born 24 August 1918 at Victoria Street Kurri Kurri. George and his wife Margaret Christine (nee BAYNES) were only in the area for a short time, during which time Sandy was born.

Sandy attended Newington College from 1932 to 1936. He then attended the Royal Military College Duntroon, where he graduated in 1940 as a Lieutenant. Sandy married Marjorie Joan WARING on 15 February 1941.

Sandy was to go on and have a distinguished military career lasting until his retirement in 1975. He volunteered for overseas duty on 27 June 1942, in the 2nd Australian Imperial Force. He was an officer in 2/7th Australian Infantry Battalion, a unit of the 17th Brigade, 6th Division. After service in Europe the 6th Division saw action in Papua.

He was known for his dedication to duty. In WW II he was awarded the Military Cross, 20 April 1945, for his leadership and his ability to lead by example at Maprik Ridge in New Guinea (1942 – 1945). On more than one occasion Sandy PEARSON exposed himself to enemy fire, disregarding his own personal safety to allow his platoon to advance up an almost vertical slope. Later, on his own initiative he led an attack which again enabled his battalion to advance 2000 yards. He served in Singapore from 1966 to 1968 and was appointed to the rank of Brigadier.

After WW II he opted to remain in the Military. For the rest of the 1940s and 1950s he filled several staff positions. 1962 to 1964 he was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel

His career continued into the Vietnam war, where he was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his role as Commander of the First Australian Task force. He was also the Director of Military Intelligence. The Officer of the Order of the British Empire award followed and was awarded for his leadership of the First



Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. For his continued service to the Australian Military, and in fact the Australian people Major General Sandy PEARSON was made an Officer of the Order of Australia. Other awards he received were the Legion of Merit (United States), Knight of the National Order of Vietnam and the Cross of Gallantry with Palm (Vietnam) He continued his military career and after being promoted to the rank of Major General he was appointed Commandant of the royal Military College Duntroon (1970 – 1973) and Chief of Personnel at Army Headquarters (1973 – 1975)

He retired from the Army in 1975 after 36 years of service at the age of 58, but continued to hold leadership positions as Executive Director of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW (1976 – 1983) and as Director of the Brickworks Ltd (1983 – 1998). As well he served on RSL committees (1977 – 2000), Newington College Council 1978 – 1998) and NSW Homeless Children (1981 – 1990).

After a long and glorious life dedicated to duty and service, Cedric Maudsley (Sandy) Ingram PEARSON passed away at the RSL Village Narrabeen at the age of 94, on the 7 November 2012. He was given a full Military Funeral and Service of Thanksgiving which was conducted in the Newington College chapel, Stanmore NSW.



SOURCES

Private Birth database

The Royal Australian Regiment Association

WikiTree

REMINDER ANNUAL FEES ARE NOW OVERDUE

Payments may be made electronically, by post or in person

Payment details: Name Newcastle Permanent Building Society

BSB 650 000

A/c No

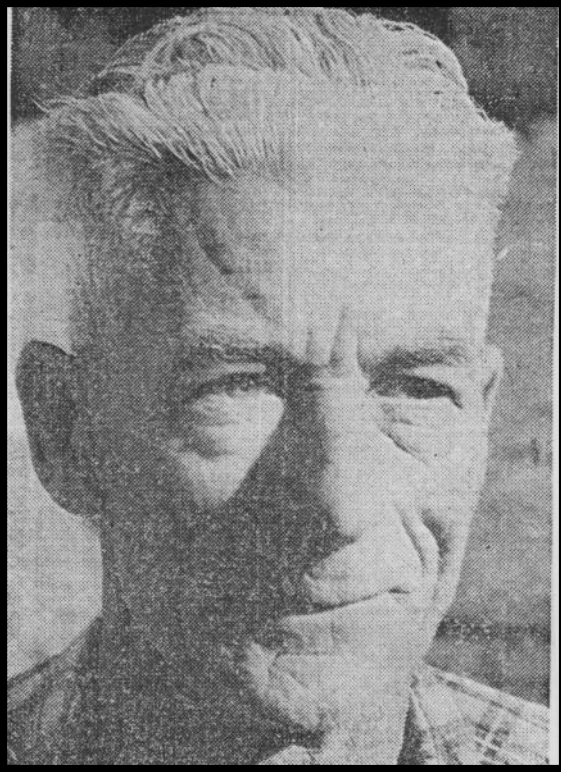
540011202

Reference Your name and annual dues

THE ADVERTISER CESSNOCK

Thursday July 10 1969

INTEREST IN OUR YOUTH



John Frederick (Jack) COPPINS

Mr Jack COPPINS of Neath has come a long way since he arrived in Australia, aged fifteen, with nothing but the clothes. He is President of the Cessnock branch of the NSW Road Safety Council, Vice-President of the Cessnock Spastic Council and is keenly interested in the workings of a youth group.

Mr Coppins arrived in Australia in 1923, one of a group of boys assisted by the Dr Barnardo scheme. He soon found work on a dairy farm at Lower Belford, where he stayed for four years. As a teenager he felt he would like to travel before he settled down. He spent most of his life traveling around.

His parents and a sister died of the bubonic flu when he was a child and he was brought up by an aunt and uncle. He completed all the schooling he could by aged fourteen, because there was no money for him to further his education. He took his first job, as an apprentice blacksmith before he came to Australia.

After leaving his job on the dairy farm he traveled to Queensland for 12 months and finally returned to Singleton where he became interested in joining a club. It was a motor cycle club at Denman a start. About this time he went into the garage business with a partner. Just after this the depression hit and put them right out of business so he went back to dairy farming.

In 1931, he went to live in Sydney where. With his mechanical knowledge he was able to find a few odd jobs.

Mr Coppins married in 1933, and to "get a few extra bob" joined the CMF. He retired from the force as company Quartermaster Sergeant. His commanding officer at the time was in charge of stores where Mr Coppins secured a job as a lift driver. He then conducted a baker's run and moved into the dry cleaning business. Mr Coppins stayed in Sydney for 2½ years.

In 1937, he took his family, including three sons to Tea Gardens. He worked for some time as a contract wood cutter before securing a job clearing and planting a pine forest. Mr Coppins was in charge of his own gang of planters when he decided to move in 1940. His next job was with the contractor laying a pipeline from Tomage to Sandgate.

Mr Coppins then moved to Abermain where he found work at Abermain No1 colliery. He worked there from 1942 to 1959. He worked through the time of contract mining, then mechanisation and shift work.

Mr Coppins then went to work for McWilliam's winery, where they were erecting new buildings and carrying out improvement work. He worked there until he retired last year. He has lived at Neath since 1946.

Mr Coppins first became interested in the road council in 1960, and the following year was elected president. He is the foundation President of the Cessnock Spastic council and has been serving as the Vice-President for many years.

He is proud of the fact that in 1964 he received Cessnock Rotary Club's man of the Year award. In 1949 he was instrumental in the formation of the Neath Boy's Club. I had a membership of about 20, ages ranging from 7 to 14, and they meet at his home. In 1954, he and his wife joined the Crippled Children's Association, and in 1956, he was appointed junior vice-president, a position he still holds.

NOTE: John Frederick COPPINS passed away 5 December 1987 at the age of 79, he was predeceased by his wife Jean Elizabeth on 20 November 1986 at the age of 72, both were cremated at the Newcastle Crematorium Newcastle.

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With another ANZAC Day approaching and the poppy being a symbol and reminder of the sacrifices made by our service personnel from all branches of the military services and from all conflicts it seems appropriate to print this beautiful poem



MUSEUM REPORT

As a result of the centenary of the Bellbird Mine Disaster, the Coalfields Local History Association, Coal Services and the MEU were nominated for the Event of the Year in the 2024 Australia Day Awards, which was subsequently won by them. It was a great honour to be recognised for the hard work put in by all those involved in the organisation and running of the event. Representatives of the three organisation were in attendance to receive the award which consisted of a framed plaque and a certificate. President Kim WELLER and secretary Lexie MATTHEWS were on hand to receive the award on behalf of the Coalfields Local History Association.

At the same award ceremony our Secretary Lexie MATTHEWS received the Heritage award. Congratulation to Lexie, who does a huge amount of work at the museum and indeed at home.



ROAD CLOSURE

At present there are road works taking place in Orange Street Abermain, right along side the museum. Orange Street is closed to traffic. This situation is making access to the museum rather difficult and care must be taken when entering Scone Street to visit the museum.

The volunteers at the museum are again working very hard on the annual Field of Honour and River of Poppies that will be held on ANZAC day. Ladies have been busily knitting poppies in both red and purple this year to remember the animals as well as the humans who were involved in the conflicts.

We hope that the event will be bigger and better than previous. There will be candles placed amongst the river of poppies. Candles will be offered for sale for the dawn service, these will be available in Rotary Park.

Volunteers will be on duty at Kurri Kurri cemetery to assist people to find relevant grave sites, offer help with information and answer questions.

SENIORS FESTIVAL

As part of the Seniors Festival the museum will be holding an open day on Thursday 14 March.

The museum will be open during usual operating hours. There will be heritage slide shows running, a sausage sizzle at lunch time and morning tea will be available. A silver coin would be appreciated on arrival. Volunteers will be on hand to answer any questions

MEETING TIMES

General meetings will be held at Abermain Bowling Club
Corner Armidale & Goulburn Streets Abermain at 3.00 pm on the third Tuesday of every second month

| | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Tuesday 19 March 2024 | 2.30 pm Abermain bowling club |
| Tuesday 16 July 2024 | 2.30 pm Abermain bowling club |
| Tuesday 17 September 2024 | 2.30 pm Abermain Bowling club |
| Tuesday 19 November 2024 | 2.30 pm Abermain Bowling club |

MUSEUM OPENING TIMES

The Museum is open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays 10.00am to 2.00pm.
Other times by appointment.

A GOLD COIN DONATION IS APPRECIATED

The Museum is located in the Abermain School of Arts Building 209 Cessnock Road
Abermain.
Parking available at rear of building

Association's Area Interest

The specified district of the Coalfields Local History Association Inc's area of interest is all that land situated in the Cessnock Local Government Area (LGA), primarily, as well as the Hunter Valley in general

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