

NEWSLETTER

MUSWELLBROOK SHIRE LOCAL & FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC (Founded 11th June 1958)

Affiliated with Royal Australian Historical Society

ABN 34611778680

PO Box 450 Muswellbrook NSW 2333

Editor Lionel Ahearn

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Book Launch

Please come along and join us as we launch two new books. *Little Bits of History Volume 5* follows previous volumes in recording short stories of the Shire's history. As in previous versions there are heaps of photos as I feel examples from the Society's large collection of over twelve and a half thousand photos add to the stories.

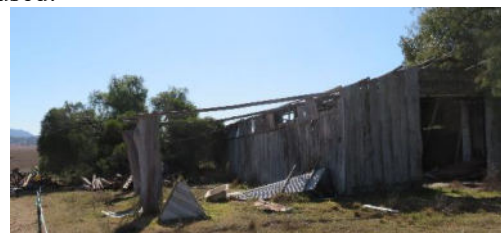
Bill Spicer's newest publication *Muswellbrook Saleyards* is as thoroughly researched as his previous works. Just before printing I was contacted by Trevor Weatherhead A. M. and his wife, Marion who were following the course of Trevor's great grandfather's diary which recorded his four month journey in 1890, droving over one thousand head of cattle from Mackay to Muswellbrook to be sold in the local saleyards. Bill and I spent a great morning with them and as a result Bill was able to add to his story.

As the stories came together in *Little Bits of History* one thing that became apparent was the incredible timber that had been used for the slab sided buildings, the huge posts used in the shearing sheds and the rails and posts split to create the miles of fencing. When Society members visited Broomfield Station I was reminded of the amount of physical effort needed to produce the timber used.



Each tree had to be felled and then split lengthwise to create two slabs. The number of slabs and their length is an indication also of the trees available.

A quick count of the slabs used in the old coach house museum indicates that over a hundred slabs were used suggesting at least fifty trees.



Photos from Folder F204 Broomfield images 3050 & 3051 taken at the time of our visit.

A few years back Garry Meissner and I visited the Yammanie property to photograph and record the Bowman private cemetery. While there I also photographed the shearing shed. Again the size and length of the poles gives an insight to the trees that existed in those earlier times.

The building of the shed would have depended on horse power and possibly bullock teams but also a lot of manpower. That it still stands today is a testament to those early pioneers.

Image from Folder F124 Yammanie



DETAILS ABOUT THE SOCIETY

Objectives:

- To collect, preserve and promote the social, cultural and physical history of Muswellbrook Shire, its environs and its people for future generations.
- to promote public access to our collections and research facilities, and
- to provide information, advice and assistance to individuals, community groups, organizations and businesses.

Meetings

The Society meets on the third Saturday of each month starting at 12.00 in the Society Room at the rear of the Muswellbrook Library. All members and visitors are welcome to attend the meeting.

Premises

The Society maintains its records in a section of Muswellbrook Library. You will find us at the rear of the Library. The Research Centre is open every Saturday from 9.30am to 1.00pm. The Research Centre may be opened at other times by appointment. Bus & tour groups are most welcome.

Annual Fees

Single \$25 Double \$35 Pensioner Single \$15 Pensioner Double \$25

The Hon Secretary may be contacted via the post office box or email mei2@bigpond.com



Before the introduction of wire fences wood was used in various forms. The majority were rail fences with most of them described today as split rail fences. However, in my early years they were always called slip rail fences as rails could be removed by slipping the rail from the morticed hole.



This photo D1259 is from the series of folders labelled *Homesteads* donated to the Society by the late Terry Tame, a long term member of the Society.

The tenons on each end of the rail allowed two rails in each hole. As a general rule two rails were used for cattle and three rails for sheep.

The work was performed with hand tools such as the axe, chisel, wedges, mallet and adze.

Photo taken and developed by T Tame who also printed them.

Editor's note. Growing up in the 40s and early 50s we were never allowed to use Dad's axe. We used the wood heap axe which had a galvanised iron water pipe handle. It never broke. His axe was given loving care. It was sharpened and then honed with a water stone. The process could take up to half an hour but resulted in a mirror finish and an axe that never stuck in the wood. Good tools were expensive and highly prized. On his death the wood heap axe was given to a relation who declared it was the handiest thing he was ever given.



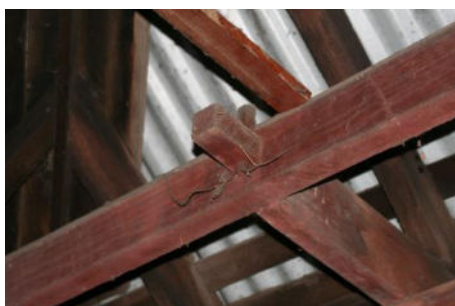
Adze

He also had an adze which was razor sharp. We were taught to use it but only under strict supervision. Apparently he had seen men seriously disabled when they hit themselves in the ankle.



Shed on Martindale property. Society photo 1947.4

This building not only shows the original slab walls but also a roof of shingles. At some time the shingles were covered with corrugated iron. Again the amount of time and effort required to split that quantity of shingles and then to fit them would have been tremendous.

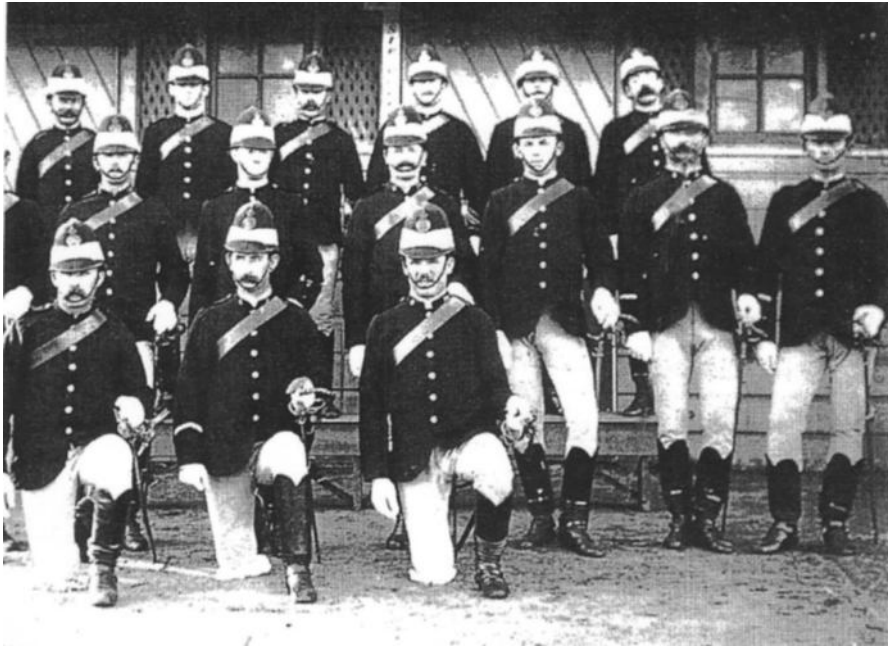


The ingenuity and skill of tradesmen can be seen in the pegged joint found in a house at 111 Brook Street, Muswellbrook. Garry Meissner and I photographed the house just before it was demolished. While the joint would have taken some time to construct it was still as firm as the day it was constructed.

Society photo D1773

Muswellbrook Police Station

The photo below from Helen Ellis, which is in our collection, caught my attention. The photo was taken the day after the Troopers returned from trying to catch the Governor Brothers.



Troopers in fresh uniforms in front of Muswellbrook Police Station. Society photo D2503

In July 1900, Jimmy Governor and his brother Joe commenced their murderous rampage across central New South Wales, killing nine women and children, maiming others, and raping a teenage girl. They were pursued for three months across 3000 kilometres, taunting their hunters with clues, letters and tricks. The last men in the state to be proclaimed outlaws, their pursuit and capture fascinated and terrified a nation on the eve of its Federation.¹



The Muswellbrook Police Station as it still stands today. Society photo 2279.17

Edward Denny Day was appointed in 1837 as the first Police Magistrate in the Upper Hunter, with jurisdiction over the existing Police Districts of Merton and Invermein (Scone) and a new bench and Police Force to be established at Muswellbrook: there were no public buildings in the township. In March 1838 Sessions were commenced in a hut rented from Henry Nowland the innkeeper. The lock-up was another hut, rented from the same owner. Prisoners could be seen through the openings between the slabs.²

Muswellbrook Police Station was established by 1863.³

¹ *The Journal of Law & Social Justice* – Jimmy Governor rampage – page 1 – Katherine Biber

² Newsletter 1/78 Court House. W Allan Wood

³ [Researchdata.edu.au/agy941 Muswellbrook Police Station/164849](http://Researchdata.edu.au/agy941%20Muswellbrook%20Police%20Station/164849)



The Police Residence is moved to make way for development and connection to new Court House. Society photo 2224.4

The new Muswellbrook Court House was officially opened in Bridge Street on 10 November 1980 but there was no connection between the Police Station and the Court House at this time. The above house was removed on the 4 April, 2006. This allowed a large amount of earth to be removed so that new buildings could be added connecting the Police Station to the Court House.

The new Police Station was officially opened on 7 March 2007



Police Station showing original building with new offices behind adjoining court house on left. L Ahearn photo

New Members

We welcomed two new members to the Society this month. Mr Tom Wren from Wollongong, NSW and Mr Harry Nichols from Muswellbrook, NSW.

Donations

Thanks to Bill Spicer for a collection of pamphlets and books on the Muswellbrook Shire. These will be added to our collection. Also a book *Hidden Letters from the Hayloft* published by Gregory J E Knodler. These were hidden during the War and were only found many years later.

The Society is always interested in old photos of the Muswellbrook Shire and old small objects if they have a local history.

This old photo donated by Narelle Gratehead was an exciting gift as it displays a part of history that was known by only a few. It is of the first section built of the old Butter Factory on Aberdeen Street. The buildings are now a Veterinary Hospital. Any more gems out there?

