

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

On Saturday 4 May the Society launched two new books, *Muswellbrook Saleyards* by Bill Spicer and *Little Bits of History* by me. Our Patron Tony McTaggart agreed to launch the books. Tony asked if he could add a display for the morning and we agreed. On Saturday morning many members of the Society arrived early to set up. We were greeted by the absolutely fabulous scene as shown below. Tony and Brian Collard had set up the whole room including all the seating and tables.



Tony even got into auctioneering mode with the proceeds going to the Society. It was a wonderful morning appreciated by all. My thanks to all the members who again provided such a tremendous morning tea and helped in the sale of books. We have already done a second print and books are available from the Society.

The slip rail fence, saddle and early memorabilia as provided by Tony and Brian Collard.



A very appreciative audience. Our biggest so far.



Tony McTaggart, Lionel Ahearn & Bill Spicer
after the launch

Above photos by Jane Thatcher

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 The Society also has a web presence thanks to Darrin Khan and Lionel Ahearn at <http://www.mbkhistorical.org>

Muswellbrook Courthouse

The notes below are based on two articles found in the Society's records. One article was by historian Mr Allan Wood and the second was written by Noel Gill. These were used in Society Newsletter 2 in 2003. I thought it was worth a repeat now that we are able to add photos from our marvellous and extensive collection.

Edward Denny Day was appointed in 1837 as the 1st police magistrate in the Upper Hunter, with jurisdiction over the existing police districts of Merton and Invermain (Scone) and a new Bench and Police Force to be established at Muswellbrook. There were no public buildings in this township. In March 1838 sessions 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.

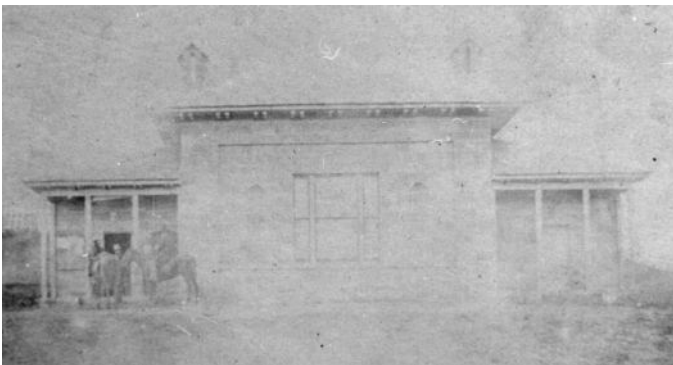
Order date 5th February, 1838 the colonial Secretary's Office invited tenders for the erection of a courthouse in Muswellbrook. (Government Gazette 7th February 1838).

No other tender having been received on the 24th May 1838, Edward Denny Day submitted his own tender to build the courthouse and six solitary cells at Muswellbrook. It was decided not to accept the tender of the police magistrate, but to advertise again. (Letters to company secretary from Magistrates and Police 1838). Such advertisements continued to appear from time to time in the Government Gazette. The amount of £750 appropriated for the Courthouse and Lock up at Muswellbrook remained unexpended at the end of 1841. (Votes and Proceeding Legislative Council 1841).

Muswellbrook bench of magistrates in a report to council said the present building used as a courthouse is a miserable state not at all sufficient for the purpose. There is a lock up, also rented, at a distance of about 100 yards from the courthouse. It is a slab building and shingle. Rental for the two buildings mounted to £40 yearly.

When sessions at Merton were discontinued from the end of 1847, the new police district called Merton and Muswellbrook was centred at Muswellbrook.

The government voted £450 on the 10th of October 1848 and the colonial architect was requested to prepare a plan which was ready in December. Tenders for the work were called in the Government Gazette on the 10th of January 1849. There were six tenders submitted. Henry Nowland lodged two, one providing for the foundations and base course to be in stone with the remainder of the work in brick all for £430 and completion in nine months. His other tender provided for a stone front as well as stone lining to the chimneys and stone mantels to the fireplaces. This came to £450 and was completed in the same time.



Muswellbrook Society Photo 0114

Tenders were called on 25th of April 1867 for repairs etc and furniture together estimated at £450. The building work went to Patrick Ryan and the furniture contract to William Penman on the same date. This work was completed in 1868 for \$380. Further additions also dated from Barnet's time when the judge and jury rooms were extended to the south and north respectively beyond the line of the original Magistrate and Clarks courts thus giving access in each case onto new side verandas linked with that at the front.

On the 5th of July 1851 Nowland advised Blackett that the courthouse was now complete and requested the inspection necessary before final payment. During the work Mortimer Lewis junior reported that though he had carefully checked the foundations some limited settlement of the stone front wall had taken place. This indicated some instability in the soil bearing value of the hill slope and as will be explained subsequently lack of knowledge of this report some 80 years afterwards led in turn to the regrettable demolition of this historic courthouse 127 years after it was first occupied.



Muswellbrook Society Photo 1087.1

In 1904 His Excellency Governor Rawson, Lady Rawson and Miss Rawson came to Muswellbrook on a Vice Regal visit.



Muswellbrook Society Photo 0412.13

After lunch, the Vice Regal party proceeded to the Court House, where a reception was held. A large number of town and district residents attended and shook hands with His Excellency, Lady Rawson and Miss Rawson. The Court House was magnificently decorated for the occasion with beautiful flowers and plants, the skill and taste of Misses Ruth and Jessie White, who with the assistance of John Loader, arranged the decorations calling forth universal expressions of admiration.

Muswellbrook Chronicle Wednesday 27 April 1904



Muswellbrook Society Photo 0734

The final alterations to the courthouse in 1929 carried out in brick at the front of the building were to contribute to the eventual removal of the Court House in 1978. Unfortunately although the editions were keyed into the original work their foundations were inadequate, consisting of minimal strip footings the design of which took no account of differential settlement and the instability of the site which Mortimer Lewis junior had recognised 80 years earlier. Inevitably these cracks appeared in the new 1929 work and because the cracks in the brick works are magnified in appearance internally they were considered unsafe and finally led to the decision to demolish and rebuild.



Muswellbrook Chronicle photo 30 April 1980



During the past week there has been much activity on the site of Muswellbrook new \$1.5 m Court House, when the removal of some 4 000 metres of soil has been in progress. Photo and words *Muswellbrook Chronicle* 10 April 1979 page 8



New Court House 2018, Muswellbrook Society Photo 2277.12

The new Court House was completed in 1980 and was officially opened on Monday 10 November 1980.

Happy 90th Birthday

Happy birthday to member Jeff Wolfgang who celebrated his 90th birthday last weekend. From members and friends of the Muswellbrook Shire Local & Family History Society Inc. We wish you many more.

Denman Cemetery.

I have just completed an update of the Denman Cemetery and donated a copy in book form to our Society.

The original recording of the cemetery plus previous updates have all been combined into one book. The database has been transferred to Excel which is more popular.

A large number of grave photos have also been added.



New Members

The Society welcomed three new members, Cindy Shultz, Muswellbrook. Paul Trangmar & Miguel Domingo, Muswellbrook.