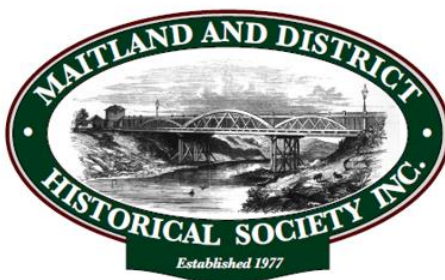


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# NEWSLETTER N<sup>o</sup> 66

31 August 2024

So, Spring has sprung .....

The last week has been unseasonably warm and windy: or has it?

I recall a story told (often) by my mother about her sister-in-law and her daughter, a daughter born at Oakhampton in August 1945. This of course means that we're talking about my aunt and cousin ... I digress: Mum's story was about Auntie Joyce having no difficulty in drying nappies. This was of course a time before disposable nappies and clothes dryers. In fact, the Lower Hunter has had and presumably continues to have a reputation for August/September westerly winds that tunnel down the Valley. I guess the point I'm making is that the weather we are presently experiencing, despite the naysayers and the purveyors of impending doom, is little more than 'normal' for this time of the year in Maitland.

All of the above aside, it's been a bugger of a winter: miserable, cold and wet. In fact, I can't recall a more unpleasant winter in recent years.

~~~~~

The most important 'event' in the immediate future are the local government elections on September 14, the outcome of which will impact directly on the development of a 'Cultural Hub & Storage Facility' here in Maitland.

As you can appreciate, I (and others), have been lobbying candidates with a view to keeping our aspirations '*front and centre*'. The one encouraging aspect is that there now seems to be a general consensus that a Cultural Hub is a priority. Accepting this acknowledgement of need, what we and other groups are conscious of is the '*How, When, What & Where*'.

Appreciating that a proposal has already been presented to Council by council officers, we need to remember that this decision was restricted by the stance taken around five years ago when a resolution was passed in accord with a presentation made to Council by Janis Wilton and Joe Eisenberg. This is of course not a criticism of Janis and Joe, but rather an explanation of why we are where we are now at (if that makes sense).

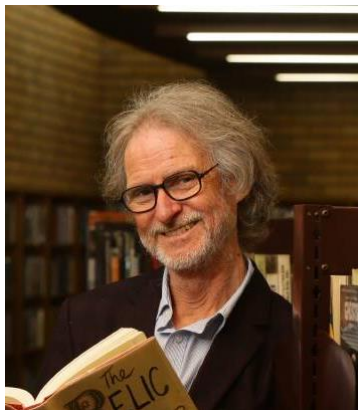
What I'm saying is, that there's still a fair bit of discussion to take place yet; we need to be part of those discussions and to have a direct influence on the final outcome.

Remaining on the subject of the local government elections, what a shambles. I genuinely feel sorry for the Liberal candidates in Maitland who missed, through no fault of their own, in being nominated. Both Ben Mitchell and Michael Cooper are fine young men with a contribution to make to our City. Both have been denied that opportunity through the 'buffoonery' of the party machine.

Well you might ask how this situation arose. Why for instance isn't it the responsibility of the individual to nominate rather than the '*party*' on their behalf. As you might have guessed, there is a reason, albeit a reason wherein a sledgehammer was taken to a thumb tack. It goes right back to the state election in 1973 when Bob Askin's Health Minister, Harry Jago '*forgot*' to nominate. If I understand the story correctly, he had everything ready but was simply distracted and left the nomination on the kitchen table. This of course left the electors of the conservative seat of Gordon on Sydney's North Shore without a Liberal candidate, the outcome being that the Democratic Labor (DLP) candidate was anointed in lieu of Harry ...

What the party boffins decided was, that as individual candidates were therefore not to be trusted to nominate themselves, that this task be undertaken by the '*Authorised Party Officer*' who would lodge bulk nominations with the electoral authorities. It all seemingly worked well .... until now.

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Our guest speaker on Tuesday 3 September 2024 commencing at 5.30pm is Peter Woodley.

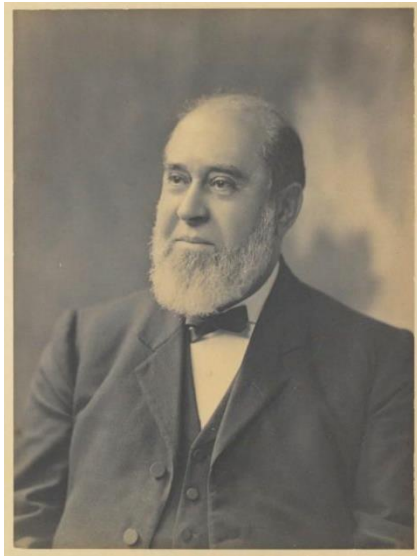
Peter studied at Sydney University and at the University of New South Wales before working at TAFE, subsequently coming to Maitland in 1980. He worked at Maitland City Library (later Maitland Libraries) for just over 40 years, in a variety of roles, including *Deputy City Librarian* and later *Reference and Information Systems*, which included IT support, customer reference services and local studies.

The subject of Peter's talk is:

## A FEDERATION OF SCIENCE: HENRY CHAMBERLAIN RUSSELL AND AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE IDENTITY.

On the afternoon of September 18, 1877, NSW Government Astronomer Henry Chamberlain Russell was surprised to find a small package had arrived on his desk at the Sydney Observatory. Unwrapping the parcel with some difficulty, he discovered it contained a quantity of coarse blasting powder, a stoneware bottle, some matches, and sandpaper, all constructed together to create a crude bomb. Police were called,

and suspicion quickly fell upon an Observatory employee, who was sent to trial, to a startling outcome



While this alarming incident captures immediate attention, it also leads us into the larger story of Henry Chamberlain Russell (1836-1907) and his significant contributions to the flowering of an identifiably Australian science in the late nineteenth century. Born and educated in West Maitland before graduating from Sydney University, Russell rose to the position of Government Astronomer in 1870, a role he occupied for 35 years. During his tenure, Russell was central to developing a framework for a truly national science, working and publishing in the fields of astronomy, meteorology, hydrology, and environmental studies. He also played a key role in promoting Australian scientific identity both nationally and internationally. His advocacy for federalism

mirrored, and in some cases preceded, the contemporaneous political and social movements towards Australian Federation, a legacy of Russell's work which still exists in surprising ways today.

Till next time ...

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'L. A. J.' with a stylized flourish at the end.

President

**A man loses three fingers in a work accident. At the hospital he asks the doctor, “Will I be able to drive with this hand?”**

**The doctor replies, “Maybe, but I wouldn't count on it.”**

# GB White, surveyor of Maitland and Hunter

By Chas Keys  
March 26 2023



George Boyle White. Picture from Mitchell Library

The principal contribution of George Boyle White to Maitland was his survey of East Maitland in 1829-30.

He had been ordered by Sir Thomas Mitchell, the colony's Surveyor General, to 'lay out' a town on the hill to the east of Wallis Creek.

The intention was to encourage future urban development not on the low lands of Wallis Plains (later West Maitland), which were subject to frequent, damaging floods, but on higher ground free from inundation.

Mitchell's goal was not immediately achieved, and West Maitland grew steadily for years while East Maitland languished. It did not outstrip West Maitland in terms of population until well into the 20th century.

Nevertheless, Boyle's plan laid the basis for a planned town with ordered streets and provision for public land uses including a school, parks, a church and a gaol.

Boyle was born in County Cork, Ireland, of English parents, and educated in England. He joined the navy, gaining skills in navigation, before arriving in New South Wales in 1826 on the Cawdrey.

He became a clerk in the Office of the Colonial Secretary and before long was appointed Assistant Surveyor in the Surveyor General's Department.

Mitchell must have been impressed by his young charge, not yet 30 years of age, because he gave him the task of designing a town at East Maitland. Then Mitchell selected Boyle for an expedition to the Barwon River.

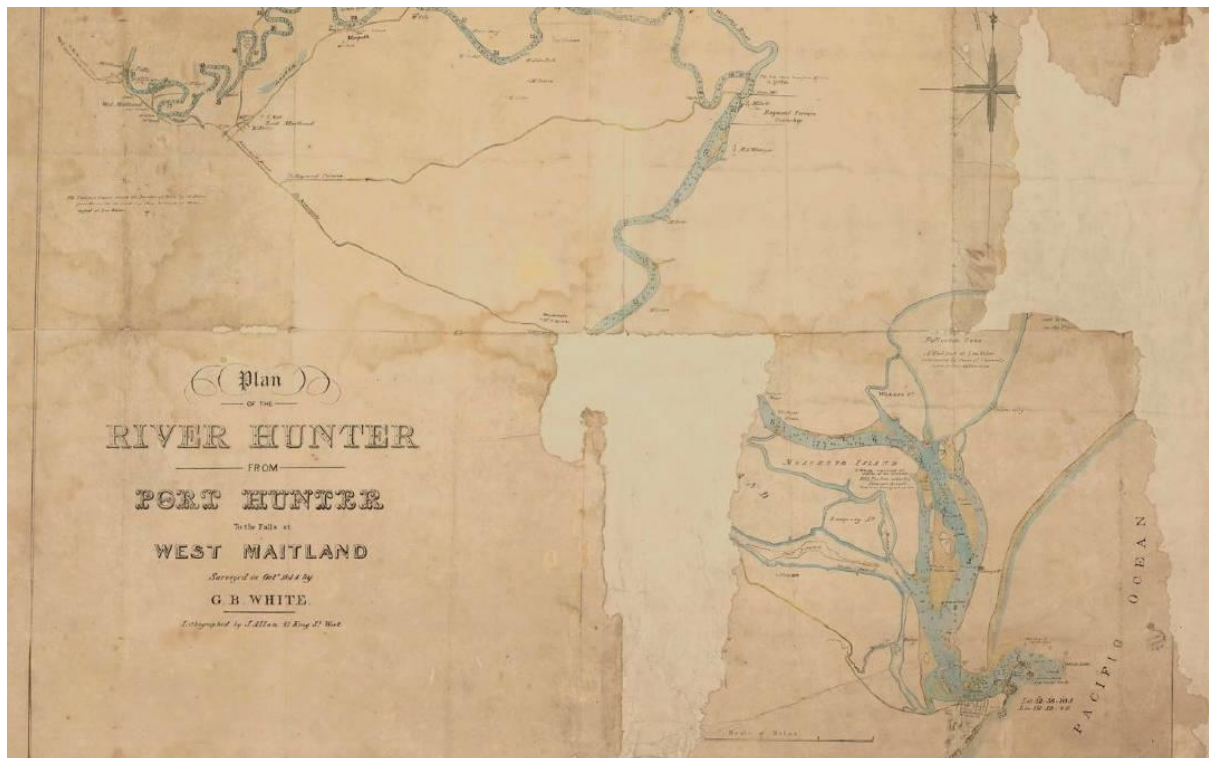
Eventually, in 1838, Boyle was appointed as Surveyor, Hunter River District.

He surveyed Muswellbrook in 1833 and Raymond Terrace in 1835 and carried out like work at Rothbury, Paterson, Gosforth and Newcastle. He recorded flood levels on the river and surveyed it in 1844 prior to dredging operations.

Boyle was a committed diarist and his diary entries provide fascinating insights into life in the Hunter in the mid-19th century.

Some of the entries are those of an angry, frustrated man who recorded people's faults in harsh and sometimes libellous terms.

He once wrote that when Maitland flooded again "many who deserve hanging will be drowned" for not discouraging growth there.



Fragments of George Boyle White's 1844 map of the Hunter from West Maitland to Port Hunter. Picture from University of Newcastle, Cultural Collections.

Apart from surveying, Boyle became a farmer and landowner. He had properties adjoining Singleton (Greenwood), on Glendon Brook (Mirannie) and at Lochinvar, on which he ran cattle, and a cottage in East Maitland.

His farming activity was unsuccessful, though, and he was twice (in 1847 and 1867) declared bankrupt.

He appears to have been embittered by the reduction in social position and influence these setbacks caused.



Boyle had a brief career in politics, elected in 1858 to represent Northumberland and Hunter in the Legislative Assembly. He did not re-contest in the election the following year.

In 1857 Boyle wrote a letter to the editor of the *Maitland Mercury*, raising his "warning voice" against further development in flood-liaable West Maitland.

He railed against the "chimerical [meaning fanciful] notions of others that [future flood events] might never occur again".

Here he understood that floods should not be seen as singular events but as part of normality and certain to recur.

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I want to tell you about a  
girl who only eats plants.



You've probably never  
heard of herbivore.

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Our History

# From convict to butcher and pub owner: William Burgess made good in early Maitland

By Lawrence Henderson

April 2 2023



An historical photo of the George and Dragon which William Burgess purchased in 1853.

Many convicts transported to the colony of New South Wales made good. William Burgess was one of them.

Born in London in 1804, Burgess was convicted of receiving stolen goods, tried at Croydon Magistrate's Court, found guilty and transported to NSW on the convict ship John.

After serving part of his time, he was granted permission in 1837 to marry Maria Wilson, daughter of Graham and Charlotte Mann, widow of Fredrick Wilson and mother of Fredrick, John and William.

After their marriage at St Matthew's Church, Windsor, he was assigned to work in Maria's butcher shop.

Burgess is first noted in *The Maitland Mercury* on 23 March 1844: A petition, accompanied by several strong testimonials of previous good conduct, having been

presented to his Honour the Chief Justice on behalf of Mr Burgess, His Honour has consented to allow him to retain his ticket of leave.

In that year he was living in Morpeth and working as a butcher.

*The Mercury* noted that he kept turkeys, one of which was stolen by Thomas McGuire, who admitted the theft and stated that he took the turkey to feed his children. McGuire was sentenced to be worked in irons for a period of twelve months for the offence.

By 1845, Burgess was wealthy enough to purchase 200 acres (about 81 hectares) of land at Nulla Nulla in Hinton from the original grantee, Francis Eagar.

He moved to Hinton the following year. Shortly before, Burgess had purchased the Farmers Glory Inn on Punt Rd.

The Inn's licence was transferred from Edward Haylock to Burgess in 1850, and later that year he obtained the lease of Hinton Punt, transferring goods and passengers across the Hunter to and from Morpeth.

On December 7, 1853, the *Mercury* states that, in the Transfer of Publicans Licences, William Burgess took over the licence of the George and Dragon Inn in Melbourne St, East Maitland from George Bellamy.

Little is known of William Burgess after his sojourn as the publican of the George and Dragon.

In 1858, he moved to Sydney where he was granted a publican's licence for the Redfern Inn on the corner of Market and York streets.

He still retained the property at Hinton and died in Sydney on 28 July, 1861 aged 57.



A modern view of the Old George and Dragon in East Maitland.



His death notice in *The Mercury* gave his residence as Woolloomooloo and noted that he was buried in Camperdown cemetery.

Mrs Burgess lived on at Nulla Nulla, Hinton, until her death in 1869.

Burgess had no children of his own and in his last will and testament, he bequeathed 50 acres (about 20 hectares) of Nulla Nulla to his nephew, James Montagu Smith.

William Burgess was an ex-convict who made good and evidently prospered in the Maitland area.

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**A man buys a clone, but the clone  
has a dirty mouth. So he throws the  
clone off a cliff. He was charged with  
making an obscene clone fall.**

**I have a pet termite.**

**I named him Clint.**

**Clint eats wood.**