

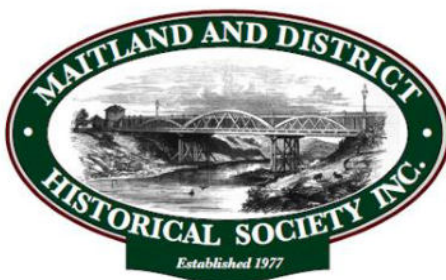
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# NEWSLETTER N<sup>o</sup> 67

30 September 2024

No doubt you've been *hang'n* out for your Newsletter? Whilst apologising, there are good reasons why it's late .... What a weekend!

It started well enough ... a trip to Sydney to attend the Grand Installation of the 41<sup>st</sup> Grand Master of the United Grand Lodge of New South Wales. It was held in the Sydney Town Hall and was attended by Freemasons from all over the world; even the Grand Master from Russia (I suspect he's doesn't get dinner invitations from Vladimir (Putin)).



To use modern parlance, the ceremony was spectacular, the music outstanding. The dinner that followed at \$170 a head, equally stupendous – the wine wasn't bad either .... We were entertained by soprano Alejandra Blandino and tenor Daniel Placido who sang a bracket together from Phantom of the Opera and Evita. They were truly superb. All in all, a wonderful night.

It went downhill from there.

On returning to my daughter's place at Canterbury, I retired.

The morning cast a pall over the whole weekend. At 1:26 am, a 'goose' driving a HiAce van ran into the driver's side rear of my car and drove off.



So, there you have it; I've spent the last few days trying to organise a hire car etc to say nothing of the inconvenience of getting home.

It was topped off by the Insurance company 'writing off' the car, the rear axle bent and the chassis disassembled. The neighbours did have CCTV but unfortunately didn't get a number plate ...

I decided on Monday that I'd bring my daughter's car home with all my masonic paraphernalia and accumulated junk from the car (you'd be surprised how much you 'accumulate'). On the return trip I picked up a puncture near the Twin Servos. If you have Chinese heritage, *stay away from me please!!!!*

Interestingly, there was a Porsche Cayenne parked less than three feet behind me. It didn't get a scratch.

Of course, the first Tuesday is our guest speaker evening and it's my 'job' to introduce him/her. Sadly, I was in the vicinity of Morisset on a Newcastle bound train and didn't get to hear what Hilton (Grugeon) had to say. That said, Cameron Archer rang me afterwards to say the event was 'excellent' and well attended. It does show the power of social media, especially in advertising events as I understand there was a large attendance.

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I was rung yesterday whilst on a bus from Canterbury to Central by a journalist from 2NURFM, enquiring as to the Society's response to the recent announcement by Council with respect to the redevelopment of Maitland Gaol. I declined to on the basis that I/we have little idea at this stage as to what the proposed development encompasses.

As a Society, it needs to be pointed out that we are not against development, but we do expect that development will be respectful of our heritage and of our heritage buildings. Yes, there is an expectation that all buildings have 'modern' access' and acceptable conveniences but .... let's wait and see exactly what the Council is proposing.

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The Council election has come and gone. Philip Penfold was again elected Mayor with a massive majority (62%).

The successful Councillors were:

Ward 1        Ken JORDAN; Amelia ATKINSON & Sally HALLIDAY

Ward 2        Rachel (Race) BARSTOW; Kristy-Lee FLANNERY & Mitchell GRIFFIN

Ward 3        Bill HACKNEY; Ben WHITING & Ben WORTH

Ward 4        Mike YARRINGTON; Donald FERRIS & Warrick PENFOLD

What this means is that the 'division' of the Council will be as follows, giving the Penfold group a 'working' majority:

Penfold Group	6 Councillors + the mayor's casting vote	= 7
Labor	4 Councillors	= 4
Liberal	1 Councillor	= 1
Independent (Liberal)	1 Councillor	= 1

As most of you know, I spent my working life employed by the Australian Electoral Commission and it saddens me a little to look at these statistics. NSW, in both Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council elections, use an 'optional preferential' system. For mine it provides results that are NOT reflective of the electorate's intent.

In Ward 1 for instance, 5.92% of the ward voted informally; the votes of a further 29.44% exhausted. This means that a whopping 35.36% of the 'votes' took no part in



the final selection. That's over one in three – I'm sure you'll agree, a disturbing statistic. Similar statistics have been generated across the other wards.

That aside, it is what it is and the 'new' Council has now been elected and we of course need to be mindful that they, to a large extent, will control development and direction over the next four years. We need to work with them.

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The U3A involvement is now complete for the year and our involvement in 2025 is yet to be determined. As for me I'm off to look for another car ..

Until next time ...



President



"The Employment Agency said you were looking for someone to do light housekeeping."

# Maitland's first paper was a one-man affair

By Chas Keys

April 9 2023

Thomas Strode (1812-80) is barely known to the people of Maitland today, but briefly he played a significant part in the life of the community having founded the Hunter River Gazette and Journal of Agriculture, Commerce, Politics and News.



The paper's lengthy title gives a clue as to the problems associated with establishing a newspaper in the early years of the colony of New South Wales: it had to appeal to as wide a range of interests and communities as possible.

Not that the title helped much in that regard, because the paper went out of existence in less than seven months.

Strode arrived in Australia from England in 1836. He became the mechanical superintendent for the Sydney Herald but more importantly in 1838 he co-founded with George Arden the Port Phillip Gazette in Melbourne.

Thomas Strode at age 72. He founded a newspaper in Maitland at age 29.

This was the first newspaper to be registered in what was to become Victoria.

Melbourne was at the time a very small town, having been settled by Europeans only three years earlier.

Strode later founded the Pastoral Times, which was published in Deniliquin, and the Gazette at Maitland.

The first issue of the Maitland paper appeared on 11 December, 1841.

In Maitland Strode appears to have operated as something of a one-man band. He was not trained as a journalist but as a printer, but he learned the arts of journalism and performed most if not all the functions involved in producing a newspaper.

These included selling advertisements, building up subscriptions, producing the copy (including editorials and items of news) and distributing the finished product. His paper was produced on a small hand-operated press.

Doing so much of the work himself suggests that it was hard in a small town like Maitland, with a population of less than 3000 in 1841, to find the wide range of skills required to produce a newspaper.

A few other small towns in NSW until quite recently were operated effectively by individuals doing virtually all the work: one such case was the weekly Coonamble Times which was produced almost entirely by one person.



HIGH-STREET, WEST MAITLAND, AS IT USED TO BE.

An artist's impression of High Street, West Maitland in the 1840s.

In his editorials Strode revealed a strong moralistic streak. He railed against the evils of temptation and argued for the need to protect the underdog, and he took it as his role to educate the members of the community.

He had the ability to perform the wide range of tasks needed to produce a paper, and the self-confidence to use it as an instrument to attack his adversaries.

Probably the breadth of his responsibilities caused the failure of his Maitland initiative in mid-1842.

When the Port Phillip Gazette began to experience difficulties, he returned to Melbourne to rescue it.

In all likelihood he had insufficient help in Maitland to allow the paper to carry on without him.

He was running a newspaper without sufficient assistance and support from skilled employees.

After his time in Maitland had come to an end, Thomas Strode lived out his career in Melbourne.

# Legendary Town Clerk Stan Dunkley was a central player in flood management initiatives

By Chas Keys  
April 16 2023



Stan Dunkley arrived in Maitland in 1949 to take up the position of town clerk, the most senior staff position in the Maitland City Council and now titled general manager.

He had to manage the integration of six previously-separate council areas and oversee the subdivision processes of a rapidly-growing city, but his time as town clerk was also to coincide with a period of many floods.

Several of them were severe, especially the 'Great Flood' of Maitland's history which struck in February, 1955. Floods were to be defining events during Dunkley's time in the job.

Maitland had lived with floods for the whole of its history, but between 1949 and 1955 the community was tried by flooding as never before.

In his role as Maitland City Council town clerk Stan Dunkley made a made a significant contribution at a difficult time in Maitland's history. Picture Supplied

Flood management became a matter of huge importance and views on what should be done to deal with the consequences of flooding were many.

One was that the central business district and hundreds of surrounding houses should be moved to higher ground at East Maitland.

In 1952, Dunkley and then mayor Jack Harvey spoke against this notion. The pair released a press release saying that such a proposal was "the last word in defeatism".

But three years later, after the calamity of 1955, Dunkley and several aldermen had come to the view that relocation was the best solution to the flood problem: "Our children, and our children's children, will call us blessed", a council figure (possibly Dunkley himself) said, if the council tackled the matter by moving the old town holus-bolus to the high ground of East Maitland.

It never happened. The cost would have been enormous, there was much local opposition especially from the businesspeople of the CBD, and the state and federal governments were distinctly unenthusiastic. Instead,

Maitland was to put its faith in the development of a modern flood mitigation scheme comprising levees, spillways and control banks. But people were encouraged to move their houses as well.

Dunkley was a central player in the flood management initiatives that were undertaken in his time.

He was the executive officer of the Hunter Valley Flood Warning Net which was set up in 1954 and linked flood gauges at Sandy Hollow, Muswellbrook, Bulga, Singleton with a base station in the Maitland Town Hall.

Radio hams transmitted gauge heights from which estimates of likely local effects were made. Needed responses (including communicating with local populations over radio stations including Maitland's 2HR) were then put in train. It constituted at the time a state-of-the-art flood warning system.



The devastation wrought on Maitland central business district after the 1955 flood. File picture from the Maitland Mercury.

After the 1955 flood a new, state-initiated flood management agency, the forerunner of today's State Emergency Service, came into existence with volunteer local units established in council areas throughout the state.

The first Local Controller of the Maitland Unit was the Mayor, Harry Skilton, with Dunkley his deputy. In this role Dunkley guarded and fought for the council's role in flood management.

He opposed the flood forecasting task being managed from afar by the Bureau of Meteorology, but the Bureau was to become responsible for it during the 1960s.



Dunkley was a respected council officer. He had the confidence of mayors, councillors and staff and made a significant contribution at a difficult time in Maitland's history.

**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."**

