

## COALFIELDS LOCAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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## CONTENTS

### Articles

The Time Capsule	3	Reflections	8
Our Beautiful Little Ladies	4	Museum Report	10
Nurse Hawkins	4	Obituary-Enid Grant	11
The Story of the Painting	6	Meeting Times	12
The Bower Bird	7	Opening Times	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**

President	Kim WELLER	
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### **Committee Members**

Rose DOBIE  
Graham SMITH  
Darrell MATTHEWS

### **PATRONS**

Catherine PARSONS  
Meryl SWANSON MP  
Clayton BARR MP

Newsletter Editor	Lynette Hamer
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### **LIFE MEMBERS OF EDGEWORTH DAVID MUSEUM**

Brian ANDREWS OAM (Deceased)  
Lexie MATTHEWS  
Cheryle SHOESMITH

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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**

# THE TIME CAPSULE

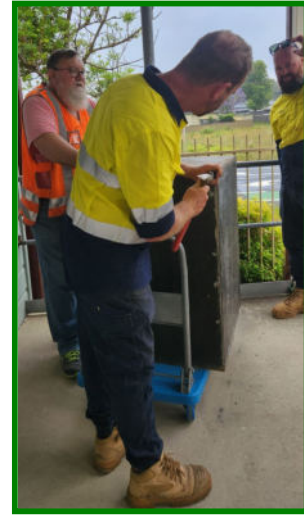
Located in Rotary Park in the centre of Kurri Kurri for the past fifty years the Time Capsule was recently relocated to the Edgeworth David Memorial museum, where it was opened under strict Work Health and Safety conditions. The outer concrete shell was removed to reveal a colony of ants. OH MY GOD ! WHAT WILL BE FOUND INSIDE THE CAPSULE ITSELF? Good question. Will the contents be preserved? Will all the items have deteriorated? More importantly what "bugs" have made their home inside? All these issues had to be investigated and addressed. The possibility of holding a public opening before these issues were resolved was IMPOSSIBLE.

Another issue to be addressed was WHAT WILL NOW HAPPEN TO THE CONTENTS OF THE CAPSULE? Some items had instructions from the donors that they be returned to family members. These wishes have now been met. The historical significance of the items could not be ignored. The contents had to be recorded. This involved scanning and/or photographing the items and cataloguing them. Instructions from the original committee stated that the items from the capsule had to be taken to the museum to undertake this process and then the remaining items were to be added to the museum collection.

Members of the museum team are currently undertaking the mammoth task of scanning and recording the contents of the capsule, which by the way have been extremely well preserved.

Something very interesting are the letters written by students from the various local schools. These letters depict school life in 1974. Some are addressed generally to the students of 2024. These letters will be returned to the relevant schools so that the present day students can compare life as it is now with what it was like fifty years ago

Once the recording process is complete a public exhibition will be held so that community members can view the contents.



## OUR BEATIFUL LITTLE LADIES

At the museum we endeavour to collect all kinds of items. As part of our preservation aim we collect memorabilia from past ages that tend to reflect past life styles. We have two beautiful dolls in our collection that do just that. The dolls belonged to sisters Emily (Florence Emily) and Amy HAWKINS. Emily, known as Nurse HAWKINS or Nursie, was a very well known nurse and midwife in the Abermain area. The wax doll belonged to Emily and the porcelain one to Amy. Their mother made the clothing for the dolls and their father constructed wooden boxes with glass fronts to protect the dolls. They have been approximately dated to the 1800's. The dolls have now been reunited in our museum.



Porcelain doll



Wax doll

## NURSE HAWKINS

### 1 October 1876 – 24 April 1962

Nurse HAWKINS was a very well known and respected nurse and midwife in the Abermain area. She delivered many babies in the Abermain, Neath and Sawyer's Gully area.

Florence Emily HAWKINS, although she was never referred to as Florence, Nurse Hawkins, Nursie, Emily even Hawkie but never Florence.

Her parents Phillip and Ann Trypena (nee Andrews) emigrated to Australia after their marriage ( 24 December 1857) in Leckford Hampshire. Phillip was a farmer and settled in the Raymond Terrace, Morpeth, Paterson area. The ten children (7 boys and 3 girls) were all born in this area. The family finally moved to Heddon Greta. The family property was called "Ayrfield". Ayrfield was sold in February 1908 after the death of Ann.

Nurse Hawkins trained at St Margaret's Hospital for women, Crown Street Sydney. She was nursing in Sydney when her mother fell ill and Emily returned to the local area to care for her.



Nurse Hawkins delivered her first Abermain baby in February 1913 at Harle Street Abermain.

Nurse Hawkins was a formidable force, she insisted on an extremely high level of hygiene. She insisted that mothers had a lying-in period of ten days after the birth of their babies and that they were a corset for a specified time after the birth. Unfortunately corsets were an item that most women of the time could not afford. Her firm instructions to husbands were to keep the house clean, check the stability of the clothes line and provide a constant supply of hot water. Were these instructions designed to occupy the nervous fathers and keep them out of her way?

Nursie walked, rode a bicycle or drove a horse and sulky when attending a confinement, however she did have a motor car at one time. She found it rather difficult to adapt to the new mode of transport and enlisted the help of various male relatives to drive her to the confinements that were outside her walking distance.

After she retired Emily spent a lot of time with her sister Amy in Branxton. It was quite obvious there was a special bond between the two sisters. Amy married William Sherwood. She was in her early thirties when she married and the couple had no children. She was widowed in 1947 and from then on the sisters were devoted to one another.

It appears that both Emily and Amy lived in the house at 135 Main Road Abermain before Emily passed away in Kurri Kurri District Hospital on 24 April 1962 at the age of 85. Amy died two months later at the age of 95. Emily is buried in the Christadelphian section of the Sandgate cemetery with her parents. Amy is buried in the Christadelphian section of Cessnock cemetery with her husband William.

Two of Emily's brothers, first born Charlie and Arthur also lived in Abermain. Charlie lived in Dubbo Street Abermain and was affectionately known as the "Mayor of Abermain". Arthur lived in Lismore Street

## NEWCASTLE HERALD

Tuesday 14 February 1950  
90 To-day, Makes First Flight



Mr Charles HAWKINS, of Abermain, who will be 90 to-day will take his first plane trip—as a birthday present. He will fly to Brisbane to-day to visit one of his granddaughters. His family gave him the round trip as a present.

Mr Hawkins said he wanted to take a plane trip and was looking forward to it.

His recipe for a long life is plenty of good food and sleep. He started to smoke at 15, and stopped 13 months ago.

Mr Hawkins was born at Stradbroke, on the Paterson River, on 14 February 1860. He started work at eight on his father's farm near Paterson and later went to Miller's Forest. He left the land when he was 26 and went to work in Wallsend coke ovens.

He later went into the mines as a labourer — at 5 shillings a day for nine hours work — rose to a screen overseer. He held that position at Wallsend pit for 14 years and at

Abermain for 26 years.

I was going to paint a black and yellow bower bird in the painting because of the story (true), that is told about the rugby League side that was called the Bower Regents Rugby League side. It was the first Aboriginal team to play league,

## THE BOWER BIRD

Back in 1944 the Aboriginals in the Nambucca Valley formed a Rugby League side called the Bower Regents. The colours were black and yellow.

They beat the Bowra Tigers in the grand final.

All the shop owners in Nambucca Heads, Macksville and Bowraville wouldn't sell the Aboriginal people any food. So they they would catch a milk truck over the mountain roads, to Bellingen. Buy all the food to last a fortnight, then they would get a taxi back home.

When the shop owners in Bellingen was told why they were shopping in the town. The shop keepers would send the Bellingen taxis over to Bowra and pick the women up and take them to Bellingen, and when they finished shopping, then the taxi drivers would bring tjhem back to Bowra. When the shop owners and the two taxi owners from Bowra found out what was happening, and how much money they were losing, After four months they decided to let the Aboriginals start shopping in Bowra again. The Aboriginals wasn't aloud to walk in the Main street. We had to walk in the back lanes and go to the back of the shop to get served through a hole in the door, one foot by two foot. I put the bird in the GUMMBANGARRE COUNTRY because that's were all the players came from.

### EDITOR'S NOTE

Darrell added the bower bird to this painting as a symbol of remembrance to the Rugby League team the Bower Regents



# REFLECTIONS

## Beryl Penny

Here are some brief anecdotes from my memory store,  
But lots of you folk here today will remember so much more

Let's tale a trip down memory lane and ponder for a while  
On some thoughts of Kurri Kurri that will maybe bring a smile.

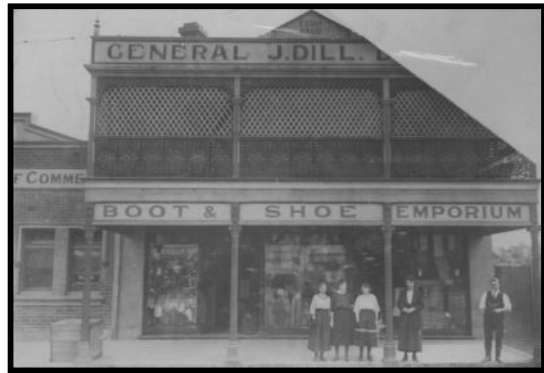
Remember back when Lang Street was dusty, rough and wide,  
And you took your life into your hands just to cross from side to side.

If you reached the middle safely you'd think "where to from here?"  
Will I turn around and go right back or continue on in fear.

Remember when we were not dressed unless  
we wore our hats,  
And Mrs Dill could meet this need, along with  
nics and nacs.

There was Hookie Perry's fish and chips, a  
treat in all our views,  
'Twas as good as any banquet all wrapped in  
the daily news.

Remember Margo's Frock Salon and Miss  
Suffolk just next door,  
Where ladies smartly got "decked out", sometimes ending up quite poor.



Remember shopping at the Store, meeting friends  
along the way,  
And the hustle and the bustle of sales on divvy day.

Remember at the movies when King's was all packed  
out,  
The cartoons and the serials as the kids would stamp  
and shout.

Remember Griffiths' deli and half time at the flicks,  
We'd indulge in sweets and ice cream and huge banana splits.

Or we'd go to Jimmy Jones' and stand in crowded rows,  
To spend up on frozen oranges and tuppenny buffalo snows.]

Remember Gallaway's Electrics and Pickering's Furniture,  
And Emlyn Davies' Shoe shop and Leith Hampton's Produce store.

George Wallace with his fruit run and Stevenson's mixed stores,  
And Murphy's boot and shoe repairs and friendly Maurie Waugh's.

McAlpine's haberdashery and Ken James' sporting goods,  
There was tailor Horrie Walpole and Fehrnbah's for fine foods



A visit to Miss Maden's would fix all wild, unruly hair,  
And Tubman's, Chalmer's and Talbot's provided chemist care.

Remember Atmore's, Scott's and Hector's, for fresh meat you could be sure,  
And Sergeants Dimmock, Dawes and Harris, the upholders of the law.

Perc Johnson's bike and paper shop and of  
course the Marble Bar,  
So for any kind of purchase we didn't venture far.

Remember when the Sallies played on Friday  
shopping nights,  
The town would really come alive with activity and  
lights

We all remember Rowley James, George Booth  
and many more,  
And Arnold Bailey's Blacksmith shop and bob  
Dick's grocery store.



Remember Whirlwind Grant, Bertie Myall and Black Snow,  
And the Log of Knowledge gentlemen at the gym all in a row.

Remember Leo Innes as the Barber of Serville,  
As his big voice boomed out "Figaro" – can't you hear it still?

Remember Tennant Sillar, Sender and McMahon,  
Dentists Saunders, Pearce and Karpin and P G Weston's cloth and yarn.

Remember Howard Simpson and the White Bus company,  
And the crowds on Kurri station taking trains to destines



Remember the train whistle shrilling cock-a-  
doodle-do,  
When newly-weds had boarded to start their  
lives anew.

No doubt you will remember many more form  
yesteryear,  
Who made their contribution to the memories  
we hold dear.

And in another century when our

descendants trip to Mars,  
They'll say in THEIR nostalgic times "remember roundabouts and motor cars"

But I hope that they can say of us, as they run their own life's race,  
"Remember our ancestors – they made this town a mighty place"

## MUSEUM REPORT

As usual our marvelous and dedicated team of volunteers have been working hard. We are finally gaining recognition for the great work that we do. We recently entertained twenty visitors from South Australia. Graham SMITH gave a talk on the life and significance of William Tennant Edgeworth DAVID. The visitors were offered a delicious morning tea and either browsed around the museum or were conducted around by one of our informed guides.

During September we hosted the regular meeting of the Hunter Chapter. This was an informative event. Again the attendees were able to look around our museum and see what a wonderful place it is.

A significant project organized by our museum was the recent restoration of the memorial to Edgeworth DAVID situated in Edgeworth David Park. The structure had become unsafe due to termite activity and general deterioration. The Cessnock City Council informed us of their intention to demolish the structure. SHOCK! HORROR!

One of the aims of the coalfields Local History Association is to preserve the history of our area. The confirmation of the outcropping of the Greta coal Seam in Swamp creek at Abermain was central to the development of the South Maitland Coalfields and thus the establishment of many of the towns on the field. This important historical monument COULD NOT BE LOST. Members of the staff of the museum contacted the Council and made them aware of the history behind the monument. Of course the council would not fund the restoration project so again the MEU were approached. They were informed of the mining history attached to the memorial and immediately came on board with the offer to fund the restoration.

**AGAIN OUR SINCERE GRATITUDE GOES TO THE MEU FOR THEIR SUPPORT IN AIDING US TO RETAIN OUR LOCAL MINING HISTORY.**

The memorial has now been restored to it's former glory and can be visited by those interested in our mining heritage.



BEFORE



AFTER

The museum is at present undergoing a significant reorganization. Shelving is being replaced to give us a little more storage area. Once we have reached our target amount from the fundraising project we will be able to install glass cabinets which will protect and preserve our items. The first room to have the cabinets installed will be the Edgeworth David mining room as we find that this room garners the most interest from visitors,

A major project being undertaken by our volunteers is the massive task of cataloguing all our resources. Once this is done we will be able to track our resources very easily. And it will make location an item so much easier.

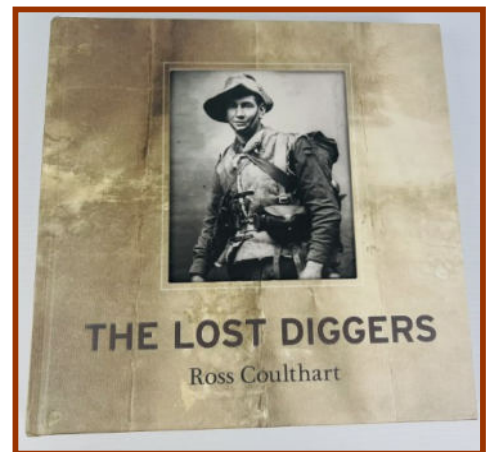
Due to lack of space the team is endeavouring to scan as many documents, photos, maps and articles as is viable to reduce the need for storage.

Due to road works and closures of Orange Street gaining entry to the museum was proving quite difficult and this was a deterrent to visitors, however we are happy to report that Orange Street is now open and access is again much better.

A recent significant donation to our library is a very large book titled "THE LOST DIGGERS", not to be mistaken for our own collection of Lost Diggers, this book documents the locating and preservation of a collection of hundreds of glass plate negatives found in an attic in the town of Vignacourt. During the World War I. Local photographers Louis and Antoinette THURILLIER took hundreds of photographs of servicemen from Australia, Britain, France, India and other countries. Vignacourt was a town where servicemen were sent to rest and recuperate from stints at the front. Just like us the task facing the discoverers of these photos is identifying the people after almost one hundred years. Just like us the process is ongoing



Louis and Antoinette THURILLIER



THE BOOK

## OBITUARIES

### ENID GRANT

It is with great sadness that the volunteers at the museum were informed of the passing of our member Enid GRANT on 18 November 2024. Enid had been a member since 2019 and was instrumental in the move from Kurri to Abermain working tirelessly to make the move as smooth as possible.

Our sincere sympathy goes to Enid's family and friends.



## **MEETING TIMES**

General meetings will be held at Abermain Bowling Club  
Corner Armidale & Goulburn Streets Abermain at 2.30 pm on the third Tuesday of every  
second month

Tuesday 21 January 2025

Tuesday 18 March 2025

Tuesday 20 May 2025

Tuesday 15 July 2025

Tuesday 16 September 2025

Tuesday 18 November 2025

## **MUSEUM OPENING TIMES**

The Museum is open Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays 10.00am to 2.00pm.

Other times by appointment.

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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