

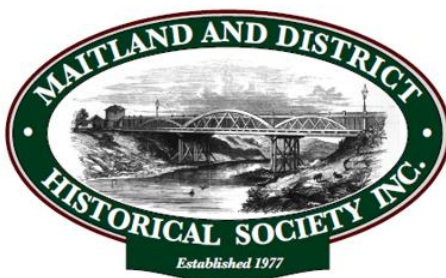
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# NEWSLETTER N<sup>o</sup> 69

30 November 2024

Tomorrow is the first Sunday in Advent, the beginning of the Liturgical calendar and technically, the beginning of the Christmas Season.

That said, commercial interests have been reminding us of the coming Season for some time, their singular motive being to see us *spend, spend and spend some more*. To that end they have been aided by yesterday's "Black Friday" sales and will no doubt be abetted by the 'Post Christmas Sales'.

The Black Friday bit really gets under my skin. Along with Halloween, I can't understand why we've begun to 'celebrate' either. Whatever happened to Black Friday being Friday 13<sup>th</sup>?

Wikipedia tells the story of Halloween succinctly:

*Halloween, or Hallowe'en (less commonly known as Allhalloween, All Hallows' Eve, or All Saints' Eve), is a celebration observed in many countries on 31 October, the eve of the Western Christian feast of All Hallows' Day. It is at the beginning of the observance of Allhallowtide, the time in the liturgical year dedicated to remembering the dead, including saints (hallows), martyrs, and all the faithful departed.*

In popular culture, the day has become a celebration of horror and is associated with the macabre and the supernatural. To me, and thanks to America, we seem to have lost our way!

I'm guessing the next thing will be "Thanksgiving" ....

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All of the above aside, we can now legitimately begin the Christmas Season. I for one, will be putting the 'Tree' up tomorrow and it will stay up until 6<sup>th</sup> January – the Epiphany.

Last Sunday, our Society travelled to Singleton Museum to be hosted by their Historical Society as our Christmas function. Whilst I didn't count the numbers, Steve did. I understand there was 22 members and guests who made the "trip".

I was hard not to be impressed with Singleton's Museum. In fact, it was hard not to be a little jealous, especially when told stories of their Council's cooperative attitude – one lives in hope!

Many thanks of course to Singleton for their generous hospitality. It was very, very much appreciated.

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Did you know Donald Trump has banned shredded Cheese.

it seems it's the only way he can make America grate again ..

Since our last Newsletter, the American elections have come and been won. It's hard to understand how an electorate of 280m people couldn't come up with some other result but, like it or not, Trump has won and the world better get used to it ...

On a serious note, one does despair somewhat at the plight of those in the "Land of Jesus' birth". I for one find it VERY disturbing that a truce has been negotiated

with Hezbollah in Lebanon, the urgency seemingly a direct result of Biden having lost the election and wanting a 'result' before the Trump administration takes over. Why was there not a 'truce' 12 months ago? American domestic politics SHOULD NOT be the catalyst for international diplomacy.

The 'Truce' of course does not extend to Gaza, Israel still intent on destroying the little that's left. To put this into perspective, I was surprised the other day to have the geographic size of Gaza compared to Maitland. Maitland Council area is 390 sq kilometres, Gaza around 360 sq kilometres. Whereas Maitland has a population of 100k, Gaza's population is 2.1m, twenty-one times that of Maitland. Is it any wonder there is nowhere to hide or escape the horrors being rained down daily on its people?

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This coming Tuesday (3<sup>rd</sup> December) will be our last guest speaker for the year. I for one am looking forward to hearing what Diane (Blishen) has to say. Following is the promotional material ...

**Our next speaker evening is at 5 30pm on Tuesday 3 December 2024 at the Society Rooms at 3 Cathedral Street, Maitland.**

**Speaker: DIANE BLISHEN**

**MY MAPPING PROJECT.**

12 years ago Diane began her mapping project which involved overlaying old maps and plans over Google Earth. Some maps and plans are not freely available so she has purchased these. The overlaying is just part of the project, by creating polygons and placemarks she has incorporated research with sources, it makes the project somewhat interactive. She uses Land Title Records to confirm locations. All research in the project has documents to support it. She started researching more than 30 years

ago, yes that's right, before the internet, flash drives, email..... While the digital material today is a great resource, she obtained her most useful material by scrolling through unindexed, undigitized microfilm and paper documents, having collected a huge amount of material including letters written by our earliest settlers, surveyors, architects, magistrates the list goes on, containing material not widely known, if at all, from people who were there at the time! By making the overlays see-through you can see today's landscape through the documents, bringing the past and present together. It is a work in progress covering earliest land grants, the river and its changes, churches, schools, pubs, bridges, tram, punts the list goes on.

The picture below is of 'Horseshoe Bend' and clearly shows the 'bits' that have disappeared into the river.

Come along and see and hear about early Maitland from a different perspective.



A couple of things for the diary:

- 70th Anniversary of the 1955 Flood. The plan is for a display in the sunken area and old coffee shop area at the Maitland Administration Centre with a flood boat and Army DUKW possible.
- Our last Bunnings BBQ is scheduled for Sunday 15<sup>th</sup> December. If you can help, give Steve either a ring or an email.



Despite the negativity in some of what I've written above, Christmas is of course a delightful time of the year. A time to relax with family and friends. I trust that each of you will have a restful and relaxed holiday, enjoying the beauty of the Season, to say nothing of the culinary delights.

See you in Church ...



President





# Some Largs residents can trace their Scottish forebears to the Midlothian and the Lang family

By Chas Keys

May 7 2023



Former Maitland councillor Arch Humphrey pictured at the Dunmore/Lang family crypt.

In the early nineteenth century the rural communities of the highlands and islands of Scotland were in trouble. The mechanisation brought by the agrarian revolution was causing a dramatic reduction in the need for farm labour, and semi-subsistence crofting was being replaced by large-scale sheep farming for wool.

Many were expelled from areas their forebears had lived in for centuries, and they had to leave for distant towns and cities or for overseas. These were the 'clearances' which brought dislocation, destitution and misery to many. One saving grace was the need for labour in developing colonies like NSW, where convict labour was becoming scarce as transportation declined.

In 1832 the NSW government established a system of assisted passage, and ships were soon bringing people from Scotland's highlands and islands to Australia. In 1837 about 280 from the Isle of Skye embarked on one 414-ton barque, the Midlothian, under Captain Morrison and with surgeon (Dr Robert Stewart) and Gaelic-speaking Presbyterian minister (Rev William McIntyre).

The Midlothian left Uig, in the Parish of Loch Snizort, on August 8 and arrived in Sydney on December 12. Several passengers, amounting to nearly 10% of those who

boarded in Uig, died during the voyage. The passengers had been recruited by Dr John Lang, brother of Andrew Lang who had inherited an estate north of Maitland to which he soon added to by the purchase of adjacent land. His holding of more than 2300 acres covered present-day Dunmore, Largs and Goulburn Grove. Initially the whole passenger complement of the Midlothian demanded they settle together.



The stately Dunmore House at Largs. File picture.

Most spoke only Gaelic and feared their community would be destroyed if they were scattered: they wished to "enjoy the advantages of attending the ministrations of the public ordinances of religion according to the forms and the language of their forefathers". Some, nevertheless, agreed to go to various locations in NSW. Roughly 100 stayed firm to their original demand and were accepted by Andrew Lang. These people had mostly been farm workers. At Dunmore they became tenant farmers and were given 15-20 acres per family rent-free for four years with rations provided by the government for the first year. They built wattle-and-daub houses out of wooden slabs with bark roofs, and cleared the brush, removed stumps, ploughed the soil and planted crops.

Andrew Lang, their landlord, provided a brick church which doubled as a school. He also provided a minister and a teacher who spoke Gaelic. They were given free lodgings and a wage. The passengers were integral to the development of Largs. Gradually, though, their Gaelic characteristics of language and religion disappeared, and 185 years later the cultural imprint of 100 people from the Isle of Skye is difficult to discern although some residents of today's Largs can trace their forebears to the Midlothian.



# In the 1800s, the fashion in writing in newspapers was flowery, wordy and ponderous.

By Chas Keys

May 14 2023



The former Maitland Mercury building at 258 High Street, Maitland. File picture.

All languages change over time.

New words appear, old ones disappear, and styles of expression and presentation change.

In the 1800s, the fashion in writing in newspapers in Australia was flowery, wordy, ponderous, sometimes roundabout in the extreme.

Today, we would find it quaint, even amusing and not always easy to comprehend.

***One sentence, of more than 100 words, illustrates the style of the time***

- Chas Keys

Take the first-ever editorial in the Maitland Mercury, published on 7 January 1843.

Probably written by proprietor/editor Richard Jones, it spelled out the philosophy which he and fellow proprietor Thomas Tucker intended would guide the paper henceforth.

One sentence, of more than 100 words, illustrates the style of the time: "We shall come to the discussion of any political question, whether of a general or local character, in a fair and candid spirit; and our columns will ever be open to the communications of all parties, so long as that temper and candour which we shall ourselves endeavour to

exercise are preserved by them, as it is by no means our intention to gratify the predilections, feelings or prejudices of one portion of the community at the expense of another, but rather to combine the energies and talents of all for one common object - the advancement of the permanent interests of the district and the colony."

In other words, we will be fair and reasonable, and everybody else should be too!

We have a common goal, and we must head in the same direction! And, one might comment, we should ensure that readers remember how the end of the sentence is related to its beginning, and without having to go back to read the sentence again!

Now take a description in the Town and Country Journal, a popular Sydney news magazine, in 1870.

The topic was the problem of the lack of stability of the bank of the Hunter River below Maitland's High St which was prone to erosion.

Shops were at risk of being undermined. The bank was "composed of a stiff soil, intersected by a layer of loose gravel, which was wasted away by the water, leaving a vacancy which became fatal to the stability of the superincumbent mass".

In other words, it was prone to slippage!

The Mercury seemed to delight in particular in its descriptions of floods. Among the epithets it devised for the all-too-frequent inundations Maitland and nearby areas experienced were "the grim terror", "the enemy of domestic peace and comfort", "the devil", "the unwelcome visitor", "the watery fiend" and the "vicious foe".

The paper was using nicknames to capture the nature of the community's interaction with floods: fear and loathing were to the fore. Floods were an enemy, which meant they had to be fought, wrestled into submission. Reporting and editorialising were often like this.

Letters to the editor of the Mercury were similarly inventive and flowery in their language.

Correspondents often seemed to be set on demonstrating their prowess with words as much as making a point about the subject they were addressing.

Nowadays things are different.

Language in newspapers today is plainer, less complex and less convoluted, much more direct.

Arguably, there is less colour in it, but equally it is probably more informative.

Whole paragraphs are much shorter than some sentences were back then!

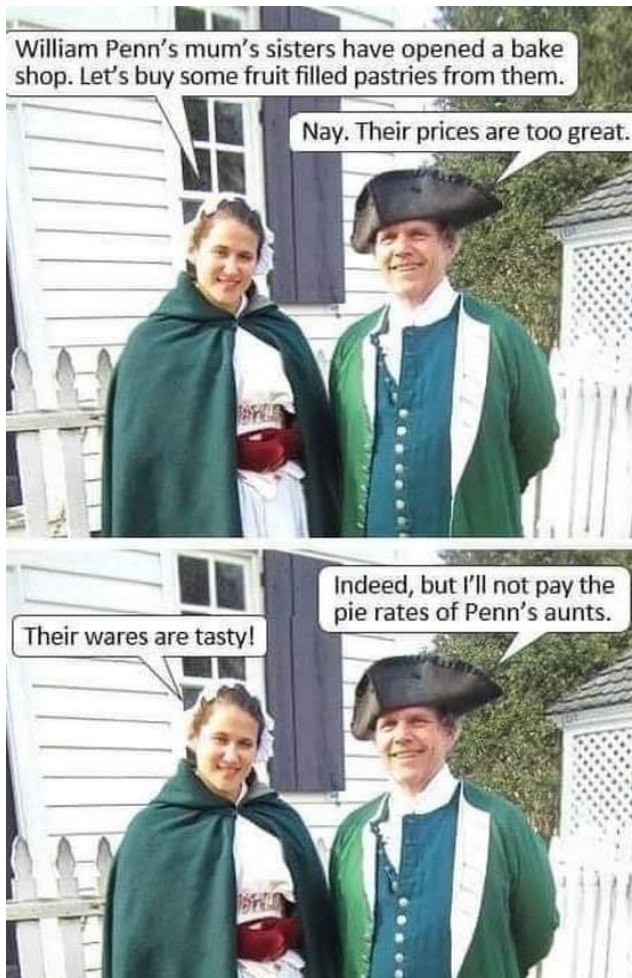
### **Benefits of a good vocabulary**

I was recently talking to an old mate and asked what he was working on these days.

He replied that he was working on "*Aqua-Thermal treatment of Ceramics, Aluminium and Steel in a constrained environment.*"

Upon further enquiry it turns out he was only washing dishes in hot water under his wife's supervision.





For all G&S Lovers

