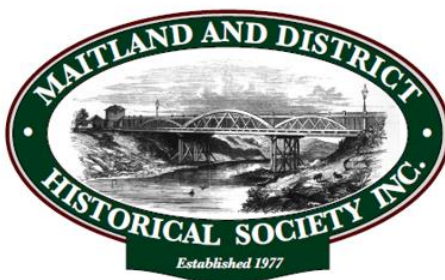


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Kevin Short OAM

**Patron:**

Dr Cameron Archer AM



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# **NEWSLETTER** N<sup>o</sup> 71

*31 January 2025*

As much as I hate talking about him, Donald Trump seems to dominate our news. Appreciating that American foreign policy is more-or-less imposed on the whole world, one can't but help wonder at the international implications of his presidency.

I guess one has to admire (not sure that's the right word) his sheer brashness and of his failure to justify any of his seemingly baseless statements. Just today, the tragic crash into the Potomac River is apparently the fault of Obama and Biden for employing inferior air traffic controllers due to gender diversity – go figure! It's hard to understand why the American people can't see it?

The preparation of 30,000 'beds' for the transfer of illegal 'migrants' from mainland America to Guantanamo Bay is mind boggling. Sadly, Guantanamo Bay is outside the American judicial system meaning that the usual legal options will be denied to any of the 'illegals'. It was also disturbing to see 'illegals' with their ankles manacled.

God knows what will happen in the Ukraine and Palestine?

The Palestine question is also having sinister outcomes within Australia. Whilst I don't condone in any shape or form, the anti-Jewish vandalism of the last couple of weeks, the media coverage is being singularly focused on the hurt caused to Jewish communities; no one seems to care what has caused the problem in the first instance. From a purely spectator standpoint, politics has become polarised and has moved to the right. Let me say this, to disagree with Israeli prosecution of this war does NOT make me anti-semitic.

Enough of America and their president ....

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Back home we have a few things happening.

February 25 is the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the record '55 flood. Maitland Council has issued the following with respect to their involvement in the commemoration. Rather than reinvent the wheel, I've plagiarised the Website ...



## How Maitland will mark 70 years since the historic 1955 Hunter Valley flood

*Maitland City Council is set to mark the 70th anniversary of the historic 1955 Hunter Valley flood with a commemorative event and string of initiatives designed to honour the resilience and recovery of the Maitland community.*

*The 1955 flood, which inundated all but two hectares of land in Maitland, was one of Australia's first natural disasters to be broadcast globally, leaving an enduring legacy on the city and its people.*

*The centrepiece of the commemoration will take place at the Maitland Administration Centre on Saturday 22 February 2025 from 10am, with an official remembrance ceremony, an SES rescue and DUKW aquatic military vehicle display, community BBQ, and the official opening of FLOOD LEVEL 1955 – A Historical Exhibition.*

*Maitland City Council will also unveil Beyond the Flood Levels, an innovative self-guided walking tour that explores Maitland's flood history through immersive, interactive experiences using augmented reality and digital storytelling.*

*Maitland Mayor Philip Penfold reflected on the flood's significance: "The 1955 flood is a defining chapter in Maitland's history. It reminds us of the challenges we've faced and celebrates the strength and unity that helped us rebuild.*

*"This anniversary honours the resilience and spirit of Maitland's people while remembering the profound impact of that historic event."*

*Saturday 22 February will mark the start of FLOOD LEVEL 1955 – A Historical Exhibition, a three-week exhibition at the Maitland Administration Centre, where*

visitors can explore equipment used during flood responses from the SES, a refurbished flood boat and a range of fashion, historical images, video footage, and displays dedicated to flood education.

Following the launch, the exhibition will be open to the public between 8.30am to 4.30pm on weekdays and 10am to 2pm on Saturdays until Saturday 15 March.

Local groups, including the Maitland District Historical Society and Maitland Regional Museum, will participate alongside emergency services like the SES, which was established in response to the 1955 flood.

NSW SES Commissioner Mike Wassing AFSM says this is an opportunity to reflect on one of the state's most significant natural disasters.

"The devastating floods of 1955 were a turning point in the history of emergency response in NSW. They highlighted the need for a coordinated, statewide response capability, which led to the establishment of the NSW SES," Commissioner Wassing says.

"Today, the NSW SES continues to build on that legacy, adapting and innovating to meet the challenges of modern emergencies while staying true to our mission of protecting lives and communities.

"Natural disasters have long been a defining part of NSW history. They test our communities in unimaginable ways but also bring out extraordinary courage, collaboration, and resilience.

The 1955 Hunter Valley flood serves as a poignant reminder of both the challenges we face and the strength we gain from overcoming them together."

Meanwhile, *Beyond the Flood Levels* is an innovative digital project using augmented reality that will bring Maitland's flood history to life via QR codes located across the city centre.

Using a smartphone, visitors to access 10 interactive augmented reality experiences during a free, self-guided tour that spans approximately 1km, offering engaging ways to connect with Maitland's history.

"This project connects our community with our past in an educational and innovative way," Mayor Penfold says.

"By blending technology and storytelling, we're celebrating Maitland's history while embracing the resilience that defines us."

For more information about the commemorative event, visit [mait.city/1955flood](https://mait.city/1955flood). To learn more about *Beyond the Flood Levels*, visit [mait.city/BeyondTheFloodLevels](https://mait.city/BeyondTheFloodLevels).

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Back at the Historical Society, member Chas Keys will be our guest speaker on Tuesday next. No doubt the content will be of no surprise to anyone who knows Chas. Following is the advertising blurb ...

**Our next speaker evening is at 5 30pm on Tuesday 4 February 2025 at the Society Rooms - 3 Cathedral Street, Maitland.**

## LEARNING FROM HISTORY: IS MAITLAND READY FOR ITS NEXT BIG FLOOD?

Speaker: CHAS KEYS



Chas Keys is a flood researcher and former Deputy Director General of the NSW State Emergency Service. Chas' talk considers whether today's Maitland community is ready for its next big flood.

There are reasons for optimism about how we will handle our next big flood. We have better levees nowadays than we did in 1955, flood prediction is more scientific, there is an agency dedicated to

coordinating community flood responses, and fewer people live in flood-liaible locations than was the case 70 years ago. But in those years the community's flood readiness has arguably declined and people today are to a degree complacent about the flood threat.

Moreover there has not been a concerted effort to educate people about flooding: the flood markers affixed to power poles in the early 1980s have virtually all disappeared, and residents, shop-keepers and other business people in low-lying areas have not been convinced by the Council or the SES that the threat of a flood as big as or bigger than the 1955 one has not gone away. Indeed a big flood should be regarded as inevitable – one day. Nobody knows when that flood will strike the Maitland area: it could be soon, or it could be many decades away. An education campaign to ensure people understand this reality would be of benefit to the community, as would warning messages as a flood approaches that clearly spell out the risks involved.

February also heralds the **Maitland Show**. We will be holding a stall and **we need help**. If you are able to assist, you might contact secretary Steve and add your name to the Roster:

Maitland & District Historical Society			
Maitland Show - Friday 14th to Sunday 16th February, 2025			
	DATE:	Friday, 14 February 2025	
		9.00am - 1.00pm	1.00pm - 5.00pm
		5.00pm - 9.00pm	
1			
2			
3			
	DATE:	Saturday, 15 February 2025	
		9.00am - 1.00pm	1.00pm - 5.00pm
		5.00pm - 9.00pm	
1			
2			
3			
	DATE:	Sunday, 16 February 2025	
		9.00am - 12.00pm	12.00pm - 3.00pm
		Pack Up	
1		Steve Bone	
2			
3		Jennifer Buffier	Jennifer Buffier
			Jennifer Buffier



## The Annual General Meeting:

Next month (March) will be our AGM. Obviously, our Society doesn't exist without people to run it.

When our constitution was rewritten a decade or so ago, restrictions were deliberately placed therein so that executive members shouldn't hold office beyond five (5) years. This was deliberate so that the Society is continually being renewed with new personalities and fresh ideas. Both Treasurer Jennifer and myself as president, were both nominated and elected *'from the floor'* last year as there was no one willing to take on either position. This year we are joined by secretary Steve who has also reached the 5 year peg.

Understanding that individuals might be reluctant to take an administrative role up front, what I'm proposing is that members accept the positions of Vice President, Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer with a view to 'stepping up' next year, spending 2025 learning the role.

Please, if you have any inclination to lead in this way, put your name forward. Jennifer, Steve and myself will welcome the opportunity to teach you.

Until next time ...



President

Here's one for the girls out there ....



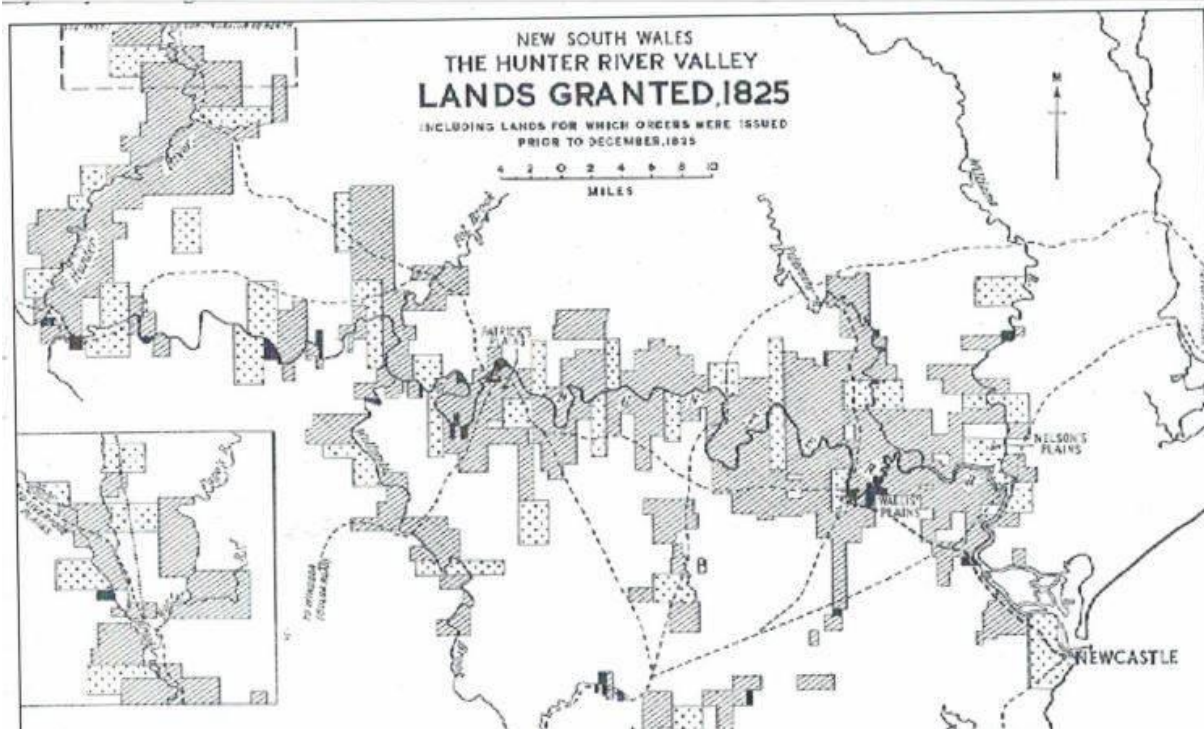
I asked the doctor if I could sew up my own wound.

He said "suture self".

# 1820s land rush helped to populate the Hunter

By Chas Keys

June 4 2023



Surveyed land grants Hunter Valley 1825.

In 1820 the European population of the Hunter Valley outside the penal colony at Newcastle, which held about 670 prisoners and a few score guards, numbered only in the dozens.

Several people were farming at Patersons Plains, between today's Paterson and Woodville, and another tiny farm settlement had been established at Wallis Plains: both were the idea of Governor Lachlan Macquarie. There were also a few escaped convicts mostly living with Aboriginal groups.

Less than a decade later, the colonial census of 1828 enumerated 3260 Europeans in the Hunter Valley and this despite the virtual closure of Newcastle as a penal station by relocation of the prison function to Port Macquarie in 1822-23.

A land rush of free settlers had occurred, fuelled by a governmental realisation that the time for large-scale settlement of New South Wales had arrived.

At the same time the end of the Napoleonic Wars in Europe had created an influx of former army and naval officers anxious to create new, profitable careers. Moreover, capital previously invested in military goals had become available to the development of NSW.

Macquarie had concluded by 1820 that NSW must grow beyond its gaol function into agricultural and pastoral pursuits, and he sought to open the colony up to settlement.

Commissioner John Bigge, reporting to the government in London in 1822 and 1823, proposed that large estates be granted or sold to men with the financial ability to run them as farms staffed by convict labor.

Grantees were to be men of "substance", not convicts or emancipists, and intending and able to develop productive farm properties which would underlie the development of a strong economic base for NSW. Some would be ex-military, others successful merchants or professional men.

The Hunter Valley was to be integral to this vision. Quickly, it was surveyed by Henry Dangar, working under colonial surveyor Sir Thomas Mitchell and focusing on the fertile alluvial floodplains of the Hunter River and its tributaries.

A few settlers like William Dun and James Webber in the lower Paterson valley and Edward Charles Close in the area that became Morpeth took up land even before the survey had begun. Their claims were incorporated later in Dangar's survey.

It was stipulated that no grant could be larger than 2560 acres (4 square miles) or have more than a mile of river frontage. Grantees were to be provided with one convict per 100 acres of grant. They could, if they wished, purchase additional land from the government.

Dangar used watercourses as natural boundaries but otherwise created a rigid grid pattern of rectangularly-shaped holdings oriented away from them.

Provision was also made for land to be allocated to church and school uses.

By the end of 1823, 36 holdings had been granted between Newcastle and Patricks Plains (later Singleton). By 1828 there were 191 grantees in the Hunter holding estates of at least 1000 acres.

The settlers (and those absentees whose holdings were run by overseers) put their assigned convicts to work clearing the land and establishing farms.

By 1828 there were more than 1800 convict males in the valley.

Thus was the Hunter population created that would support the nascent town of Maitland, soon to become the largest town in NSW outside Sydney.





# The life and times of much loved Maitland mayor Richard Alexander Young

By Chas Keys  
June 11 2023



The Maitland Park structure which houses the memorial to Richard Alexander Young. The memorial is made of local bricks and Ravensfield stone. Picture Michael Hartshorn.

The death in 1893 of Richard Alexander Young, Mayor of West Maitland, became the backdrop to an incredibly long and fulsome account in *The Maitland Mercury* of the man's life and the funeral cortege and service that farewelled him.

The passing of public figures in the nineteenth century often saw such coverage, sometimes seemingly almost making a saint of the recently departed. Today such flowery coverage might be thought over the top.

Young was only 43 when he died.

Born in Maitland in 1850, he went to Maitland Boys High School and became a leading Maitland solicitor.

***Richard Alexander Young was, according The Mercury, "almost an ideal mayor, urbane, courteous and business-like but conciliatory and tactful"***

Two days before his death on the night of Sunday, September 3, he had attended the funeral of James Wolfe, a prominent local businessman, and on the day of his own demise he had presided over a function at the town hall and gone to an evening church service.

Back home in Regent Street he felt unwell and went to bed early.

During the night he expired, quietly and in no apparent pain.

He had had rheumatic fever 14 years earlier and his heart had been affected.



Young had filled many roles in West Maitland.

In addition to being an alderman and the mayor for three years he was involved in many organisations.

Young was on the board of the fire brigade, a member of the hospital committee and the board of the Maitland Public School, the president of the West Maitland Water Brigade, secretary of the Maitland Benevolent Society, a Justice of the Peace and active in the Wesleyan Church.

He was, according *The "Mercury,"* almost an ideal mayor, urbane, courteous and business-like but conciliatory and tactful".

He was also "philanthropic and charitable, and discharged his ceremonial duties gracefully and intelligently".

It will, the paper said, be "difficult to replace him".

In High Street and at the funeral "the trappings and the suits of woe were not meaningless and formal but were outward tokens of an inward grief.

All churches, all creeds joined".

Young had clearly made a mark.

In West Maitland, the town hall flag was flown at half mast and the building itself was closed for the day of the funeral as were all the solicitors' offices.

Almost every shop in High Street, Maitland had its shutters up or its windows draped in black, and many closed at 1pm for the funeral which began at 3pm.

The cortege was perhaps a mile long, led by two mounted troopers and a guard of four cavalymen who were on the Long Bridge before the vehicles of the bishops and clergy at the rear had left Steam Street next to the railway line at the bottom of Regent Street.

More than 300 vehicles strong and with many organisations represented, the procession headed along High Street to the Wesleyan Church, where the pews, the communion rails and the supports of the oak coffin were draped in black.

Many local organisations sent wreaths.

The Rev JE Carruthers' eulogy was quoted at length in *The Mercury* two days later, the service described as "the largest and most affecting held in Maitland".

It was an elaborate, even spectacular affair.

