

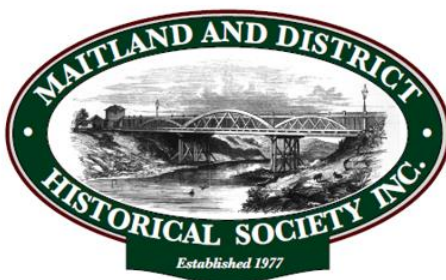
President:

Kevin Short OAM

Patron:

Dr Cameron Archer AM

Web: www.maitlandhistorical.org



Secretary:

Steve Bone

Address

PO Box 333
MAITLAND NSW 2320

Phone:

0468 438 990

Email: maitlandhistorical@gmail.com

ABN: 96 156 309 595

NEWSLETTER N^o 73

31st March 2025



Steamfest 2025 is almost upon us; to be precise, over the weekend of 12 and 13 April, a mere fortnight away and yes, we will again be manning the Information Tent in the Station Precinct and yes, we will need YOUR help.

Helping in this instance is not an onerous task and involves mainly the handing out site brochures and directing patrons to the ticket office, the Rally Ground etc etc ... Once you get your bearings it's a breeze. We'll also have some books and memorabilia for sale but that too is remarkably easy. There will always be someone on duty with experience to help if you get a difficult question.

In previous years there were tokens for food/coffee etc and whilst I don't really know, I'm assuming this will happen again.

PLEASE, let Steve know you're available and come along and enjoy the camaraderie and join in the fun



The Annual General Meeting:

The AGM has 'come and gone'. Little has changed in the senior executive positions with yours truly remaining as President, Steve Bone as Secretary and Jennifer Buffier as Treasurer.

You might recall I indicated in the February Newsletter that there has been a reluctance in the last few years for 'new blood' to step-up. In that sense nothing has changed although on this occasion, a couple of members have agreed to become understudies with a view to perhaps stepping up in the future.

As I said in that last newsletter, all organisations, if they are to remain relevant, need an infusion of new blood occasionally.

All of that said, it is indeed a privilege to be president of our Society and I am appreciative of the confidence and support of the membership.

The other BIG thing for the diaries is



More detail later.

and finally:

our next Speaker Evening is scheduled for

TUESDAY 1 APRIL 2025 at 5 30 pm.

Speakers: Ruth Murdoch & Peter Smith

Topic: 1950's & 1960's digitised home movies of events around Maitland

There is a \$5 charge, which also covers the cost of refreshments.

All welcome.

Until next time ...

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "L.A." or similar.

President

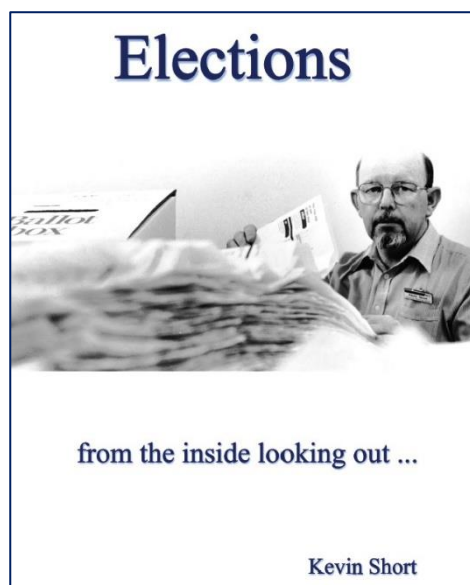


You'll note that I bit my tongue and haven't yet mentioned Donald Trump. That said, I think this one somehow mirrors my views

Prayer

In church last Sunday, I heard a sweet elderly lady in the pew next to me saying a prayer. It was so innocent and sincere that I just had to share it with you:

"Dear Lord - The last few years have been very tough. You have taken my favorite actor - Paul Newman; My favorite actress - Elizabeth Taylor; My favorite singer - Andy Williams; My favorite author - Tom Clancy, and now my favorite comedian - Robin Williams. Just wanted you to know that my favorite politician is Donald Trump"



On the subject of elections, don't forget we have one on Saturday 3rd May.

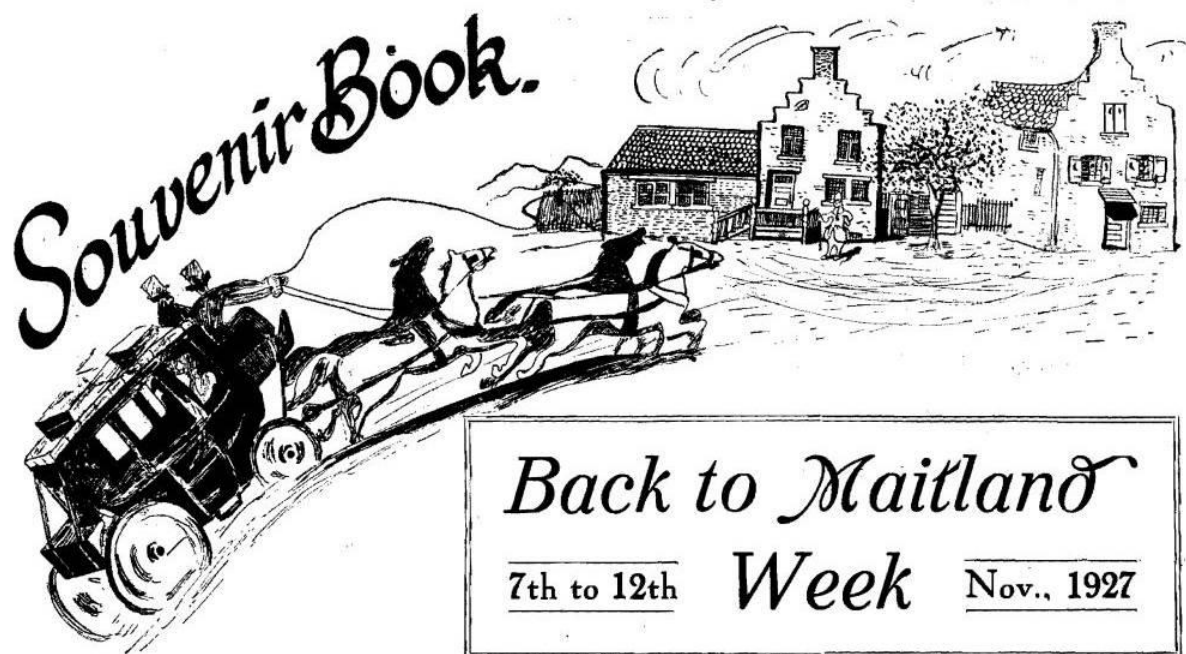
If there's anyone out there who would like to know how Australian elections (as opposed to American ones) work, the Society has copies of a book I published in 2022 as a response to Trump's 2020 defeat and his querulous rhetoric.

I like to quote a friend, who on reading it, said: *"I learned things I didn't know that I didn't know I needed to know"*

It retails for \$35.

Our history: Back to Maitland Week: popular book of 1927

By Chas Keys
June 25 2023



The popular Back to Maitland Week booklet front cover.

'Old' Maitland, the Maitland of (say) the decades before the Second World War, was good at partying.

It recognised important occasions with parades, processions, marches and civic celebrations: these were held in conjunction with events like the birthday of Queen Victoria in 1897 and the visit by the Duke and Duchess of York in 1927.

Maitland welcomed and lauded the Coo-ee marchers of World War I as they strode down High Street en route to enlisting for battle, and its people turned out in numbers to celebrate the openings of the West Maitland railway station and the Belmore and Long bridges. The funeral corteges of prominent local people always drew big crowds.

Sometimes, Maitland sought to entice former residents, those who had left to build their lives in Sydney or elsewhere, to visit their old home town and revel in its glories, achievements and amenities.

It did this in November 1927 when the West Maitland Municipal Council hosted a 'Back to Maitland' Week.

Designed to show Maitland off, this initiative was promoted by an 80-page souvenir book paid for largely by advertisements from the town's business houses. It featured descriptions of West Maitland and the delights it offered.

ACCOMMODATION		
<p>THE New Carrington Hotel HIGH STREET, WEST MAITLAND</p> <p>THE BEST OF ACCOMMODATION Public and Saloon Bars--Ladies' Parlor and Bottle Department.</p> <p>A SQUARE DEAL FOR A ROUND SHILLING AT— ALBERT CHAPMAN'S Phone 452.</p>	<p>DON'T HOPE FOR THE BEST, COME ALONG AND GET IT AT THE Angel Inn HIGH ST., WEST MAITLAND</p> <p>Moderate Tariff — — — Garages Established 1827—Re-built, 1927. JIM. McLERNON, Proprietor. Late of Tamworth & Nelson's Bay</p>	<p>Currency Lass Hotel "A HOME FROM HOME"</p> <p>J. BOWER, Proprietor. Phone, Maitland 456.</p>
<p>Volunteer Hotel (Right Opposite the Mercury) WEST MAITLAND</p> <p>FIRST-CLASS ACCOMMODATION GARAGES AVAILABLE</p> <p>W. GLENDENING, Proprietor. Phone, 237.</p>	<p>Royal Hotel (Opposite Town Hall) WEST MAITLAND</p> <p>GOOD ACCOMMODATION—LOCK-UP GARAGES—EXCELLENT TABLE</p> <p>R. A. FLEMING, Proprietor. Late of Dunedoo Phone 562.</p>	<p>Imperial Hotel THE HOUSE OF SPORTS WEST MAITLAND</p> <p>BERT. SIMMONS, Proprietor Phone 115.</p>

One of the ads for accommodation in the Back to Maitland Week booklet.

The advertisements ranged widely. They covered men's and women's clothing establishments, car sales and repairs, real estate agents, hotel accommodation, book, art and music stores, cafés, hairdressers, taxi proprietors and more. The major retail outlets of the time EP Cappers, Galtons, Hustlers and Poultons were prominently depicted.

Many events were encompassed by the week. There were special church services, displays by the Fire Brigades and the Ambulance, a civic reception, a grand procession down High Street, a speedway meeting, dances in the Town Hall and the Catholic Hall and a street market in Elgin St. There was also a 'Queen competition' contested by two young women, one from East Maitland and the other from the West. These events drew large crowds.

There were articles in the book about the newly-established Maitland Eisteddfod, the Chamber of Commerce, the Hunter River Agricultural and Horticultural Association ("the premier association of its kind in the state outside the Royal Agricultural Society") and about tennis, cricket and the football codes.

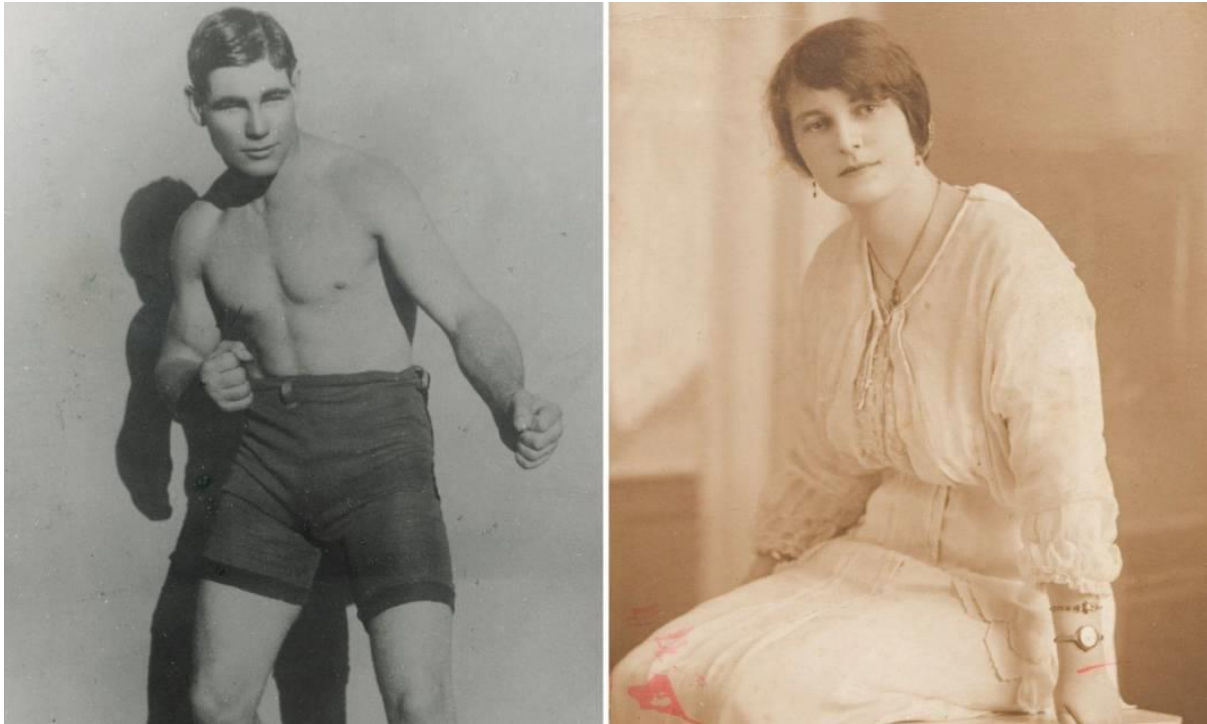
Photos of the town's imposing buildings were also included. The banks (the Australasian, the CBC, the Union, the Bank of NSW, the Australian Bank of Commerce and the Government Savings Bank) were depicted, as were the Maitland Mercury building, Maitland Hospital, West Maitland Court House, Walka Water Works, the Technical College and West Maitland Town Hall.

The publication was a creature of its time, so the royal family and the English aristocracy featured. There were photos of King George V, the Prince of Wales (later King Edward VIII) and the Duke and Duchess of York who had visited Maitland the previous April, and the Governor General.

Hero or pawn Les Darcy was no ordinary boxer

By Kevin Short

July 2 2023



Les Darcy and his sweetheart Winnie O'Sullivan. Pictures: National Library of Australia and National Museum of Australia

Peter FitzSimons' book, *The Ballard of Les Darcy* (2009) paints a picture of a man who was the epitome of every young woman's dreams, a dashing Adonis, intelligent, strong (but gentle), protective and a good provider. Importantly, he loved his mother.

In Maitland it is almost sacrilege to suggest otherwise, but is this a realistic appraisal of Les or was he just an average young bloke trying to do no more than make a quid the best way he knew how? In Les' case, with his fists.

One thing is certain, James Leslie Darcy was no ordinary young man. He was arguably the best middleweight boxer in the world but sadly, never became World Champion, as is falsely eulogised on the base of his statue in King Edward Park in East Maitland.

There is of course the counter view that he was a coward and a charlatan, a shirker, who stowed away on a steamer bound for the United States from Newcastle on the eve of the first Conscription Referendum in late October 1916.

Contemporary authors have argued that Les' mother wouldn't sign his enlistment papers, and this may have been true save that he was to turn 21 two days after his furtive departure.



The mourning locket found among Winnie O'Sullivan's effects following her death in 1974. Winnie was Les Darcys fiancée and was with him at the time of his death.

He no longer needed her permission.

His behaviour in the US is on occasion also questionable. That he took American citizenship, forsaking his Australian allegiance in order to secure fights, might well suggest a selfish disregard for what was happening elsewhere in the world.

The assertion that he would cross into Canada and enlist there after securing the World Championship belt is largely anecdotal.

That political pressure was applied from across the Pacific is acknowledged. Les was after all exactly what Billy Hughes wanted in order to entice the young men of Australia to the killing fields of France and Flanders.

Equally, there were vested interests pulling strings in Australia, men like 'Snowy' Baker and 'Huge Deal' McIntosh who had become financially dependent on the money train generated by Darcy's popularity and boxing prowess.

Equally, one wonders if the advice given to Les from his family priest, the redoubtable Father Cody, was free from religious, social and political prejudice.

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Was Les therefore a protagonist or a victim or perhaps both?

Sadly, we'll never know as he died in Memphis, Tennessee on 24 May 1917, his life cut short by pneumonia brought on by septicaemia and endocarditis. His dream of the middleweight world title was unfulfilled.

His decision to leave Australia secretly, in breach of the War Precautions Act, provided the controversy (and enemies in high places) without which no folk hero is complete.

His lonely death gave him an aura of martyrdom. So powerful a legend did he become that 50 years after his death, flags flew at half-mast on Stradbroke in the valley of the Paterson River, the place of his birth. A memorial was unveiled by the Governor General Sir William McKell.

A hundred years after his death, James Leslie Darcy still inspires the pens of Australian nationalist writers.

**My wife just stopped and
said, "You weren't even
listening, were you?"**

**I thought to myself...
"That's a pretty strange
way to start off a
conversation."**



Glass coffins ...
will they be popular ???
Remains to be seen !!!