

# Mareeba Memoirs

February 2009 Edition

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## MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMITTEE

|                            |   |
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| <b>PATRON:</b>             | Cr. Tom Gilmore, Mayor,<br>Tableland Regional Council |
| <b>President:</b>          | Robin Gourley 4095 5508                               |
| <b>Vice-President:</b>     | Vacant  |
| <b>Sec/Treasurer:</b>      | Helen Kindt 4092 3599                                 |
| <b>Committee:</b>          | Janice Gourley 4092 5377<br>Bill Alison               |
| <b>Librarian:</b>          | David Foster 4092 1139                                |
| <b>Newsletter Editors:</b> | Joan Collins and Mario Russo                          |

Email for interesting articles you may want to submit to the Memoirs. [joan.collins@bigpond.com](mailto:joan.collins@bigpond.com)

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## MEETINGS

General monthly meetings held on the **FOURTH** Thursday of each month **EXCEPT** December.

## MEMBERSHIP FEES:

Due 1<sup>st</sup> July each year.

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## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to the New Year of 2009. I would like to wish the Society and all its members a year full of achievement and learning both for themselves personally and as Members of the Society.

Thank-you to Joan Collins for taking over the position of editing Mareeba Memoirs and thank-you to all Members simply for being members.

At our first meeting for the year on Thursday the 22nd January we planned our direction and perhaps made a few decisions on what we as a Society would like to achieve and learn.

## SAYINGS FROM YOUR SECRETARY

Welcome to 2009 and what an interesting year this should be! The Committee has been hard at work thinking and planning ways and means to make this a most fruitful time for us all. As it was once said, 'Life be in it!'

Congratulations to Pat Leafe and her band of merry people who worked so hard at the Christmas raffle, raising funds to help keep your Society running. Bill Alison has taken over organizing the Field Trips, so place your order with him as to where you would like to visit.

As usual, willing hands are needed to keep the filing system chugging along. As well, a few hands to do the same with the Scrap-books will NOT go amiss. Joan Collins has taken over the Mareeba Memoirs as Editor, (thank you Joan), as well as placing the contents of the library onto our database. No mean feat I can assure you. One thought has been that as many members as possible should be able to take over any of these roles in Centre in case of an emergency, so training will be available for those interested. Talk to me.

I personally thank all those supported me during last year, I can assure you it was and still is appreciated. This year a united effort will also be needed to keep your organization running as smoothly as it has been for many years. Your input is valued.

Looking forward to seeing you all throughout the year.

*Helen Kindt*

## FROM THE LIBRARY

One of the problems with adding books to the database is that I seem to spend a lot of time reading! The first area of the library to be put onto the database relates to the wars that Australian troops have fought in. There are some fascinating books in our collection, and I will share snippets with you as I read my way through. For this edition, let me share with you the origin of the famous Slouch Hat.

In the publication titled *Traditions, Facts and Folklore* compiled by the Anzac Day Commemoration Committee of Queensland, we read that the hat was born because of a shortage of helmets during the South African War. The first unit to top its uniform off with the slouched felt hat was the Imperial Bushmen's Corps. In 1937 there was a suggestion that the slouch hat be abolished, leading to an article entitled "*The Old Shako*" in the London Daily Mail that expressed regret that this could be happening. The article stated that it

*"summons a picture of the Aussies, young, spare, and magnificently athletic, with their brown faces under slouch hats pinned up by the famous Australian Badge".*

Come into the library and have a browse

## JANUARY MEETING

The January meeting of the Mareeba Historical Society was held on January 22nd. At this meeting, there was discussion on getting members more involved in the actual running of the society, and taking on some of the work that is done by Helen and David on the days the society shed is open to the public. Helen suggested that members may be keen to learn how to field enquiries, including undertaking genealogical searches that people require as they delve into the history of their forbearers. A lot of very important work happens on those 2 days, and only a very few people know what is required.

## **BITS 'N' PIECES**

The location signs for the WW1 gun emplacements have been beautifully made and donated by Bluey McAllister. They are currently on the meeting table at the Historical Society Shed, come in and admire them when you have a minute. Many thanks to Bluey. We hope to have them in place for Anzac Day.

Thanks also to Pat Leafe and her band of willing ticket sellers for a successful Christmas raffle. I spent a couple of Friday mornings with Eddie and Pat selling tickets, and it was interesting to watch the world go by and finding out about Mareeba and its surrounding district.

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## **HISTORY IN UNEXPECTED PLACES**

While I was overseas a couple of years ago, we were travelling through Ireland, and had overnight in a hostel in Lanaghar. As we made our way down the corridor to our rooms, we were amazed to see a big poster of the Eureka Stockade including the flag. Our links with the immigrants and miners of that historic event are still strong and that event is such an important part of our history. It probably seems strange to you that we were surprised, but I think it was the unexpectedness of it, seeing that magnificent poster in a fairly shabby working men's hostel that was filled with fly-in fly-out Polish workers!



## **BITS 'N' PIECES (CONTINUED)**

### **Queensland turns 150 in 2009**

*our people, our places, our stories...Q150*

Queensland celebrates 150 years of independence from New South Wales on 10 December 2009.

### **Mareeba Historical Society will be part of the celebrations.**

The Historical Society will have a photographic display, and hopes to have their volunteers dressed in period costume. We would love it if anyone could contribute to the costumes, maybe you have something tucked away in the wardrobe? Whale bone corsets? Dress with bustle? Top hat? Seriously, if you have ideas, inclination, sewing skills, old costumes etc, contact Helen Kindt (her number is on Page 2) or call in to the Centre to see us on Tuesdays or Wednesdays.

As part of the celebrations, Cairns Base Hospital will be holding a Photographic and Historical Memorabilia Exhibition.

31 January 2009 - 31 December 2009

Information taken from the Queensland Government 150Q website. Keep watching the site for upcoming events.

# Steam Train

## Get onboard the Q150 steam train!

Kicking off in April 2009, the train will travel throughout Queensland, reaching more than 30 communities, from Cairns to Mt Isa to Quilpie to Toowoomba. Local communities will welcome the train to their town and celebrate Queensland's 150th with events and activities.

On track for 2009:

- Welcome ceremonies in each location
- Events and activities in each location celebrating our unique culture, heritage and the aspirations of local and regional communities
- Travelling messages of goodwill, carried by students from one location to the next
- Short local trips on board the Q150 Steam Train in most locations
- '150 tree boulevard' - carbon offset initiative and Q150 legacy project in each location.



Our research efforts will be directed at John Doyle during this historic year and particularly in the month of July. If you have any interesting information about the history of this amazing pioneer, come down and tell us about it.

## Far North Queensland— by Joan Collins

Hi everyone. I hope you all had a great Christmas and a Happy New Year! This is the first publication I have put together for the Mareeba Historical Society, so I guess a brief introduction is called for in case you are wondering who I am.

I have lived in Mareeba for two and a half years, my husband and I moved here from Nhulunby when we both retired.

Mareeba has always been of interest to us, and we have found it a great place to live. Kev spent his childhood in Herberton, son of Joe and Edna Collins, and I have some history of family in North Queensland, my grandfather lived and worked in Mareeba as a young man, and my great grandfather worked in a mine around Mareeba somewhere, and was subsequently killed in a mine disaster in this area. (I need to do some historical research to find out the full story). My grandfather, Alf Bracewell—who was a Mareeba resident at the time of his marriage to Maude Gray—took up a selection in El-Arish and established a sugar cane farm where he and Maude had their family. My mother Gladys was a registered nurse, and established the Bush Nursing Service in Bollon in South East Queensland. She met and married my dad, Jack Neven who was a drover. My sister Enid and I were both born in the South West Queensland area and we never lived in the North as children. Dad hated North Queensland with a vengeance, he considered it the home of mould, leeches, and wait-a-while. This meant that mum Enid and I came by ourselves every two years for Christmas to this wonderful country.

Oh, the excitement of holidays! Far North Queensland was like a paradise to us. We had Christmas in El-Arish, then drove down to Mission Beach, the kids standing up in the back of Uncle Charlie's Holden ute, among the bags and baggage, hanging on for grim death, and waiting for the first glimpse of the ocean. Imagine letting kids stand in the back of a utility! What an outcry there would be these days.

With all of our cousins, we spent two or three weeks in the little hut granddad built on Mission Beach with its sand floor, push out shutters, long drop toilet up the back, and beds and mattresses pulled down from the rafters. The adults made up the beds and unpacked the supplies while the kids headed down to the beach. We had bamboo bonfires on the beach at night (after going into the surrounding rainforest to cut the bamboo and then drag it back to the beach), and our days were spent swimming, and exploring the rain forest and nearby beaches. North Mission Beach was a very small place in those days, there was a little store way up the beach from us near Porters Creek, where the main town is now, and I remember a big open building that was used for dances and social occasions. It was absolute freedom at the beach! If we were really lucky, the Burdekin River would flood just as we were about to head back down South and we would get an extra few days in the North. So began my love affair with North Queensland. Kevin and I continued to holiday in this area every year, bringing our children over to visit the relatives. When the time came to retire, we had no hesitation in coming to this region.

Mareeba is certainly an interesting place to live, and its history is fascinating. I joined the Historical Society out of interest, and then because of my computing background, was asked to add the collection of books, pamphlets, serials and memorabilia onto the Historical Society database to allow us to have a good electronic record of our resources, and to make searching for a particular article, book or resource easier. That is my task for this coming year, and I am looking forward to it. I am a librarian by profession so look forward to a journey of exploration of the history of Mareeba and surrounding districts.

On our trip to Britain in September 08 Lorraine and I went to Cornwall to the places my grandparents had lived in and talked about. I had my basic family history information so off we went to see for ourselves.

My great grandfather James Edwards, his wife Michal, and their 5 children had left Cornwall in 1882 to come to the Herbert River district where James had work as Overseer on Traills Sugarcane Plantation near Trebonne. The oldest son John (my grandfather) was also employed there as a steam-plough driver. Once settled, the family sponsored John's fiancé Ellen Johns to join them and the young couple were married at the C of E minister's residence at Stone River near Trebonne in 1884. James had to work on the plantation for five years to pay for their passage on the ship. Then, because of good reports of gold at Croydon, the whole family including John and Ellen's two small children, travelled overland to the goldfields. They ended up at Georgetown in 1887.

I knew James had once been an inn-keeper at The King's Arms at Marazion, near Penzance, and also a groomsman for a Doctor Tresise in the same town.

The other village of interest was Gulval, only a 20 minute walk from our hotel in Penzance. Great grandmother Michal had several family burials recorded at Gulval parish church, and we wanted to search for headstones.

My grandmother Ellen had been a companion to Lord St Levan's daughters on the castle/abbey of St Michael's Mount.

This is an ancient abbey built on a high granite outcrop off the shore of Marazion in Mount's Bay. It is linked to the town by a stone causeway which goes underwater at high tide, and grandma used to tell of sometimes having to run to beat the tide to make it safely across. She was 19 when she left to marry John in North Qld.

We arrived in Penzance by bus and found a hotel near the station, next day caught a bus to Marazion. 10 am and the tide was going out. Got off in the Square and could see the corner of the Kings Arms Inn so we had a quick look at the neat sparkling white old building, selling 'Real Ales and Homemade Meals', but didn't want to miss the tide so went down the steps to the beach and causeway. Tide out and plenty of time to cross, I was thinking of Gran and her stories.

We set off knowing coaches and drays and before that priors and pilgrims had travelled this rocky pathway for centuries. The wet rocks were pretty even, just above the clear shallow water, with all sorts of seaweed, limpets and stones each side. Once across we bought entrance tickets (it is now run by the National Trust). There was a gift shop and café etc and old stone buildings, once fishermen's cottages, school, hotel, boathouse and dairy. The causeway and stone harbour were completed in the 1400's to shelter Henry V's ships, improved in 1727 due to the growth of trade, rebuilt in 1824.

There was the same long climb my grandmother took over rough stony steps, steeply winding to the summit of the granite outcrop.



View from the top

Then, what a view! - all around the bay, over to Penzance and Marazion and out to sea. It was sunny and clear but very windy and the black Cornish flag with its white cross flapped strongly.

There were some cannons placed around the outer wall, rescued from shipwrecks. And there it stood several levels high – an ancient priory merged with a medieval castle, becoming a stately home - all imposing weathered granite.

Inside was full of history, with volunteers throughout to answer questions. It was very impressive, in good order and furnished and decorated as it used to be, pictures and paintings and a museum of old guns, armour, pikes and lances etc. We went all through to the top level, saw the chapel and rooms up there. Looking through the windows you could see the thickness of the walls and how high it was. The present Lord still has a private apartment within the castle.

Ellen must have had fun with the girls in this huge place. After descending the long stony path again we wandered around the shops and buildings, and viewed a film of the island's history in the cinema room.



St Michael's Island in the distance

Back to the Kings Arms, we chatted to the bar staff about my great grandfather, took photos, and ordered a 'Real Ale'. It was flat beer, slightly sweetish, I didn't mind it. Toasted all the family!

I was happy to have seen the old pub, with its exposed oak beams and fireplace, various curios and old photos; still good for who knows how long. Wish we could have seen upstairs, where James is said to have once dangled his wife out the window!

We walked the streets where they'd lived, and trod the cobbled lanes – a day to remember.

John and Ellen retired from Georgetown to Mareeba, where Coles now stand. They have a grave and headstone in the old Mareeba cemetery. Ellen lived to 93½.

Next episode – the ancient Gulval parish church, a special highlight.

## FIELD TRIP

A Field trip was organised for Sunday 16<sup>th</sup> November to Hales Siding, Orient Camp and Stannary Hills. The group was met at Watsonville by Bluey McAllister and Ray Pedersen. Bluey accompanied them on their explorations.

The highlight of the trip was finding the well that supplied the water to Orient Camp. One of the group sited the position of Orient Camp on his GPS.

Orient Camp was established as the township for the mines of East Orient, the Wiernert and Nannum Amalgamated, a large open cut mine. There were 2 periods of occupation of the town, from 1886 to 1893 and again was re-established in 1906 when the price of silver rose. The last of the mining production ceased in 1924. The population of Orient Camp never exceeded 40. The field trip group reported that there were groups of mango trees (great place for smoko) and lots of broken glass. Want to know more of the history of this little town? It is all in Colin Hooper's excellent book *Angor to Zillmangon; stories of North Queensland's deserted towns* which is available for viewing at your local Historical Society.

The field trip participants explored the gravesite at Hales Siding. They found traces of the old 2 foot wide tramway going to Stannary Hills-Irvinebank railway. This section had its terminus at Boonmoo on the Cairns-Chillago railway.

The Stannary Hills line closed in 1936 and the railway was dismantled in 1941-1942..

The group went on to the Stannary Hills Cemetery, and saw about 10 to 12 headstones, and quite a few unmarked graves. At the site of Stannary Hills a well earned rest and smoko break was taken. This historic site is where the remains of Stannary Hills township was established.

There will be more field trips in 2009 for anyone who is interested, members will be notified of the upcoming dates .....

## **RESEARCH ENQUIRIES**

**Assistance:** A research officer may assist by searching Society records.

**NON-MEMBERS:** A minimum fee of \$22 for a 2 hour search then \$11 per hour or part thereof afterwards for researcher to search. \$10 per day for D.I.Y researchers.

**ADDITIONAL EXPENSES:** If a visit to a cemetery or other library is deemed necessary, traveling expenses will also apply.

**ENQUIRIES** All enquiries should be in writing and include a stamped self-addressed envelope. If via Email, no research will be undertaken until the fee is paid.

### **A REMINDER OF MEETING DATES FOR 2009**

**February: 26<sup>th</sup>**

**March: 26<sup>th</sup>**

**April: 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**May: 28<sup>th</sup>**

**June: 25<sup>th</sup>**

**July: 23<sup>rd</sup>**

**August: 27<sup>th</sup>**

**September: 24<sup>th</sup>**

**October: 22<sup>nd</sup>**

**November: 26<sup>th</sup>**

**December: No meeting**