

# Mareeba Memoirs

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## MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMITTEE

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<b>Vice-President:</b>	Vacant	
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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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### DISCLAIMER:

The Society accepts no responsibility for the contents of this newsletter. The views of contributors are not necessarily those of the society

## PRESIDENTS REPORT

President Robin, secretary Helen and trip co-ordinator Bill putting three of our war site signs in place. The beautifully presented signs were made by Bluey McAllister.

Robin on crowbar, Bill on shovel, Helen holding the sign straight.



## SAYINGS FROM YOUR SECRETARY

Hard to believe another year has flown past and here we are facing our Annual General Meeting. This may be the place for a timely reminder that our financial year starts from **1<sup>st</sup> July to the 30<sup>th</sup> June each year**, so to those who have **NOT** renewed their membership please do so quickly, as you will not be able to vote for your incoming committee otherwise.

This year has been another very busy one. Having the phone put on at our Research/Resource Centre was an exercise and a half. That has become a very complicated affair when once it used to be so simple. A sign of the time apparently. Anyway it has been achieved.

The second-hand book store at Mareeba Monthly Markets is still proving to be a fair money maker, though we do need book donations to keep this going and as usual we do need more helping hands to ease the strain on those who regularly work that morning. Give it some thought to assist.

While on the theme of assisting, once again, helping hands are needed for simple filing jobs, as well as our contemporary scrap books, keeping the Centre clean and tidy, sweeping and washing floors, etc. etc. We will be happy to take your call offering help.

We had a wonderful offer in July, a Grey Nomad offered her assistance in 'beautifying' some of the older damaged photos. This offer came out of the blue and was quickly taken up. The person involved is a professional photographer, lives in Canberra and wends her way up North each winter

We were very lucky, all she wanted was a 'thank-you' letter from your Society. If a total stranger can assist us, why not **YOU**, our member.

To those who do assist, I thank you for this. The Committee for their support, Joan for doing an excellent job as Editor, John and Lorraine, our odd-job people, Dot for great morning teas on Market Days, (needed, I might add), and the other stalwarts who have supported, helped, worked, and generally been on call, you are appreciated.

The rest of this year will continue to bring in changes; it is interesting times we live in. My wish is that all the members will still be available to take part in any exciting events that may fall into our laps.

Pat Leafe, David Foster and myself attended the "**White Gloves Tour**" held at Mareeba Library on 17/06/09. This was a hands on of treasures from the John Oxley Library. They consisted of journals, diaries, photos, dance cards, Manifesto of the Qld Labour Party and many other items. An interesting and informative talk was given describing how some of the items were donated to the Library and how they are being preserved. It is hope that this Tour will be the first of many.

Helen and Pat fronted the following week to attend the opening of '**Grandma's Hat Box**' exhibition also held at Mareeba Library. This was an old metal hat box found to contain official documents, a wedding dress, photos of the wedding and lots of family history. A rare and interesting insight to family history, family trees, and stories.

How about each and every member putting their family tree down on paper then donating it to the Society which will help keep our records up to date and interesting. It doesn't matter if you and yours do not come from the area, just do it. Charts to make this easy can be found at the Centre, ask for them.

Six of us spent Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> July morning at Costin Street Pioneer Cemetery for a couple of hours, at the urging of Dot, who walked our legs off telling us about the different people buried in that cemetery.

We started with what we believe to be the oldest burial, 1896.  
John Doyle's last resting place was found as well as two victims  
of the Mt Mulligan mine disaster

It is planned in the not so distant future to hold a working bee  
and tidy up these graves. Keep in touch and we will inform you  
when it's going to happen. Congratulations Dot, a wonderful  
morning.

Well, I think I have rambled on enough, suffice to say, I look  
forward to seeing you very soon especially at the monthly meet-  
ing nights, where it is planned to have interesting guest speakers  
inform and entertain us.

Yours in preserving the past.

Helen

### **FAMILY HISTORY.**

Below is a short listing of some of the genealogical research  
items that live on our shelves. You may need to browse through  
them soon.

1881 British census and National Index

British Isles Vital Records Index.

N.Z. BDM 1848 to 1920

N.Z. Cemeteries.

Various Electoral Rolls

Various Irish research material

BDM from The Cairns Post and local papers

Various family trees and histories donated to the Society

Early telephone books from 1948 to 1968 (some missing) then  
up to date.

Different years UBDs

That should be enough to whet the appetite, more next Mareeba  
Memories. Meanwhile come on in and have a look.

Keep shakin that tree! Jeannie

## **BITS 'N'PIECES**

### **Q150 Steam Train by Pat Leafe**

The old railway station of Mareeba came alive again on 26 June in anticipation of the arrival of the Q150 steam train at 3.15 pm. Hundreds of people were standing around laughing and talking with one another, with flags to be waved as the train approached. The school brass band played an arrangement of tunes which was lovely and some people had their cameras set up on tripods.

The train whistle blew, and everyone's attention was focussed to the right as the train slowly approached the station. Cameras clicked and flags waved madly as the train slowly pulled up at the station. People greeted family and friends who made the trip up on the train from Cairns. After everyone had disembarked, a few speeches were made by the Mayor Tom Gilmore, Jason O'Brien and a few school students who did a good job. The last carriage being pulled by the train was 150 years old, so Mareeba Historical Society members Robin and Janice, Dot, Bill and I stood in front of it and had our photo taken. It was great to see so many of the town folk taking an interest in the event.



## From the Editor

It seems to be a fitting time—with the Q150 train coming to Mareeba—to have a look at how our railway lines became the lifeblood of the Tablelands with Mareeba at the crossroads. Between 1873 and 1879 explorers, pastoralists and seekers of gold and minerals discovered the riches of the high country. James Venture Mulligan and William McLeod discovered gold on what came to be known as the Hodgkinson Goldfield. Townships started to appear, and seaports were established, Cairns, Port Douglas and Geraldton (Innisfail).

Port Douglas was the major port of entry for both Hodgkinson and Herberton with a rough track up to the tablelands, suitable for drays and coaches. It was a boom time in the North driven by the discovery of minerals. There was a large volume of traffic from Port Douglas - men, horses and drays made their way along rough tracks hewn out of the rainforest and scrub to the Tablelands. Tinaroo tinfield had been opened, with Atherton, Robson and McCord as its prospectors. The discovery of a large amount of tin on the Wild River was the trigger for the birth of Herberton township.

Little townships sprung up around groups of mines, and the Port Douglas-Herberton coach route was extended to service these towns and the people who explored and mined the area. Settlers and tin miners working on the Wild River at Herberton put increasing pressure on politicians to provide a railway from the coast up the ranges. They were doing it hard; it was almost impossible to get provisions up from Port Douglas at the best of times, let alone during the wet season. The search for the most viable route for the railway from the coast to the Tablelands began. Based on the known evidence of mineral wealth, the need to establish a railway seemed indisputable. There were three possible choices for a starting point for a railway; Cairns, Port Douglas and Innisfail. If politicians had known the lifespan of the mining boom, who knows whether the money would have been poured into building the railway line.

The Cairns route through the Barron Valley Gorge route was eventually chosen and an incredible saga in the history of rail began. Mareeba was ideally placed not only as a posting stage on the coach road from Port Douglas but also as a major railway station for the proposed route from Cairns up via the Barron valley.

In 1886 the railway began to burrow its way through the mountains and on August 1893, it reached the coach staging post on Granite Creek. The people who had worked on the line and followed its progress arrived in Granite Creek, leaving behind them the camps that had been their temporary homes during the building of the railway, and for many, Mareeba became their permanent home, swelling the population and giving it a sense of establishment and permanency. Mareeba became an important railway town a busy, bustling centre, with people drawn to settle in the area.

Pre-World War One saw a boom in wolfram in both Australia and Europe, to supply armament industries. However, a wartime ruling banning the sale of ore to foreign buyers prompted the Government to assist the local mines by building a State Battery at Bamford and an Assay Office in Mareeba.

Mareeba, because of its proximity to the rail network and the surrounding mineral areas, was chosen as the site for the Assay Office. The town of Mareeba was originally surveyed in 1893 following the arrival of the railway from the coastal port of Cairns. The line was later extended to service the Herberton tin fields. In 1901, the Mareeba to Mungana railway line was opened to service the Chillagoe mining fields, further securing the future of the township. By 1916 the population of the Mareeba district was estimated to be over 1,200.

At this time, Mareeba Railway Station was the Tablelands' main depot for materials needed in the construction of roads, army camps, warehouses, hospitals and other defense facilities. These movements, plus the 3,579 U.S. and Australian troops brought to the area, once again changed the face of Mareeba township. It became one of the "feeding points" for troops travelling by train to the Atherton Tableland.

*References:*

*Borland, Hugh. Mareeba: Meeting place of Waters*  
*Cairns Historical Society bulletins*



## MAREEBA'S OLD ASSAY OFFICE

*by John Edwards*

I remember walking past these old buildings on the way to school in the '40s, with the grass high over the K-wire fence, and wondering who worked or lived in them. I thought they must have been cold to work in, because of the big chimney one end. I often looked at the dark grey slate tiled roof. Later I learned the Forestry Officer had the use of them. In the early 60's when I worked for the Public Works Dept I had to repair these buildings, as they had very hungry extra white lodgers (termites), picnicking on site. So general repairs were carried out, I reglazed the windows with frosted glass and fixed a leak on the south-eastern end of the roof caused by a leaking tile. The nail holding the tile was cut off, the tile removed, and a piece of tin was cut to shape and fixed in place and re-nailed. I then soldered over the nail holding the tin tile, and the leak was fixed without a replacing a slate tile.

About this time an awning was built over the door to the eastern side and the other outbuilding was repaired.

Later on, about 1962/3 the new court house was built to house the IWS, DPI, CPS and Mines Dept and the building was to be opened by Premier Joh Bjelke Petersen. There was a big rush by the PWD to give the old assay office and outbuilding a lick of paint and replace window panes before the official opening. Painters were rushed up from Cairns and the work carried out in panic mode.

The Forestry Officer was still left out in the cold down in the old assay building. It was a few years before he was shifted into a DPI room, which became available when a DPI inspector was not required after the meat works closed.

Now the old Assay Office has been 'restored' to complement the new court house. As a heritage building on its original site, it deserved to have its historical slate tiled roofing restored, not a corrugated iron substitute which changes its appearance. Slate tiles are still being used in Brisbane restorations. I suppose we have to welcome these small offerings to save what little heritage architecture we have left, but it's disappointing. We won't get a long life out of this new roof, maybe 30 years with luck.

## FROM THE LIBRARY

This quarter I have been looking at the establishment of Mareeba as a township and the importance of position in the battle for continuing prosperity. I have been lucky enough to have read Hugh A. Borland's *Mareeba: Meeting Place of Waters 1893—1946*. I also have on loan copies of Historical Calendars published by St. Thomas 's School, compiled by Mary Thompson and Lorraine Townsend and *A Pictorial History of Mareeba*, also by Mary Thompson and Lorraine Townsend. What a treasure trove. Next issue of the memoirs will include "*The Spider from The Gwyder*". The author of the article in the *Australian Post* where it was published spoke of the role of the half-forgotten "reciter" who once played a prominent part at most amateur entertainments. Many of his recitations, like many of the songs, were imported but a few of the pure Australian creations have managed to survive. "The Spider" is one of the best, and for years was recited in country towns, bush huts and in camps. Back in the early days of the Bulletin newspaper, a Bulletin Reciter booklet was included, and people could send in their bush poetry to be included.

Hopefully there will be a resurgence of this art of reciting bush poetry and prose. Should we start a writers and reciters club at the Historical Society to give people the chance to perform not only their own masterpieces, but some of the wonderful Australian poetry that reflects our lifestyle, our town, our country? Get in touch with us if you have any suggestions for reviving this part of our history.

The quotes by Brooks Atkinson and Lord Brabazon were in the Mt Molloy, Julatten & Mt Carbine Quarterly Dollar Bulletin, March, 1996. Thanks folks.

*In every age 'the good old days' were a myth. No one ever thought they were good at the time. For every age has consisted of crises that seemed intolerable to people who lived through them". Brooks Atkinson.*

## 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>**

A thought about speaking at meetings. *"I take the view, and always have done, that if you cannot say what you have to say in twenty minutes, you should go away and write a book about it.*

*Lord Brabazon, quoted in a 1955 press report.*

**BOOKS FOR SALE AT  
MAREEBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY CENTRE**

**Author**

**Title**

LENNIE WALLACE

Dead Mans Gold  
Wild Jimmy  
Camels, Camelmen and Abdul Wade  
The Palmer Poltergeist  
Mt Mulligan's Highway  
Wheelbarrow Way  
*Nomads of the 19th Century Goldfields*  
Cape York Peninsula: A History of  
Unlauded Heroes: 1945—2003  
The Battlers of Butcher's Creek  
From Nanango to Cooktown  
Bitten by the Bull Bug

JACK STRUBER

Jack's Book: 75 Years and Perfect Health:  
a true story of faith, believing and determination.

MULLIGAN, J.V.

A Journal of Exploration  
*Republished Aug 24, 2007*

MAREEBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS

Riches of Wolfram Camp Compiled by John C Hay.

WW2 Diggers Book of Poetry Compiled by Helen Kindt

The Lone Wolf: Last of the old-time prospectors: The autobiography of Sam Elliott. Edited by S.G. St Clair-Kendall and John C Hay

HARRIS, Ken

Bullock Hearts

HAY, John C in association  
with Colin and May Jones

Demise of the Typewriter:  
Recollections of a Queensland Era.

ANTHONY HAN-MATTHEWS A Remarkable Venture of Faith

CLOW Margaret

The Mecca of our Desires—Kuranda and  
the Famous Barron Falls.  
First published. in 1914

RIMMER, Mike

Up the Palmerston: a history of the Cairns  
Hinterland up to 1920. Vol I and II.