

# MAREEBA MEMOIRS

Edition No 44  
November 2009



## *O Christmas Tree*

*O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree  
Your branches sing of beauty  
At Christmas time when all is white,  
Your branches green a rare sight  
Come snow or hail, come rain or shine  
We think of thee, O faithful pine  
O Christmas tree, O Christmas tree  
You ever green of beauty.*

Published quarterly by Mareeba Historic Society Inc.  
345c Byrne Street, Mareeba 4880

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

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title</b>
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              Demise of the Typewriter:  
with Colin and May Jones              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 1 and 11.

## MEMBERS OF YOUR COMMITTEE

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### Mareeba Historical Society

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Have you got a story to share with our readers? Email the editor Joan Collins on [elizabethcollins4@bigpond.com](mailto:elizabethcollins4@bigpond.com)

### MEETINGS

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

Meeting dates on Page 15.

### MEMBERSHIP FEES:

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

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## PRESIDENTS REPORT

As Mareeba Historical Society's incoming President I am a little ashamed to admit that I don't know how the paper and recording side of the society works. I haven't helped with this side of it at all. Instead I have just gone along and enjoyed all the field trips. To correct this I have set myself two hours per fortnight to work at the centre. My excuses for this small amount are (you can't rush these things you know), (every little bit helps) & (a small regular contribution overturns any singular mammoth effort)

Last week while at the Helen Kindt centre two visitors came in. I immediately retreated as I don't know any thing about the centre. While hiding under the display cabinets I heard Helen say, "we keep a paper record" So now I know that apart from going on excursions the Mareeba Historical Society keeps Paper Records. Now, the next time I do my little stint at the centre I plan to enquire more about these paper records and how they are recorded and stored also how and what we research. Who knows one day I might get clever enough to be left alone to deal with enquires. Something that I'm really looking forward to and that may help with this is the training session that has been offered to us on Monday the 7th of December. Any other members who may be interested are welcome to come along. Just let us know numbers so far six of us have lined up.

Our final meeting for the year is on Thursday 26th November. Apart from the two market days in January the centre will be closed from market day on Saturday the twelfth of December till Tuesday the second of January 2010

Thanks from Janice

## SAYINGS FROM YOUR SECRETARY

Golly, end of the year ALREADY! Doesn't seem possible. Still when we look back and see what has been accomplished, no wonder time flew.

Besides the Mareeba Monthly Markets we were involved with the first Yungaburra Booksellers Market in October, all of which have been successful as well as hard work. Being in the Centre at 5.30 am every market day gets to be a bit of an effort at times.

We kicked off slowly in 2009, by being host society for the quarterly meeting of Heritage North, and then progressed to putting on a photographic display for Walkamin State School's 50<sup>th</sup> birthday. We also loaned Dimbulah display stands and photos for an event they held there. At the same time we were asked to loan a couple of videos to TTNQ/Cairns Chamber. Gold panning champions held in the Park brought forth another photographic display from us. Feedback was very flattering and many people came in to look and were impressed.

Your Society has had many items of interest donated to us, much appreciated, so our collection is growing at a great pace.

One of our members has been diligent in placing a short history of people or the area in the Tablelands Advertiser this year and it gave me a thrill when recently a person mentioned that she reads it every month. In fact looks forward to receiving the paper.

This year saw the Centre having the phone connected which caused great problems for a while but all is calm now. Fingers crossed.

Our own Pat Leafe and her willing helpers have been busy running raffles during the year and doing a great job, I might add, especially in these trying financial times.

We were fortunate in being donated a photocopier that not only copies A4 but also A3. This complements a new coloured copier recently bought.

David Foster, Janice Gourley and myself attended a few seminars in the latter part of the year. Significance of Collections, and logging into CAN, (Collections Australian Network).

Another very successful photographic display was held at Tinaroo Dam at the celebrations of being 50 years since the dam opened. Books have been purchased to add to those groaning on the shelves.

Talking about books. We were privileged to meet Felicity Jack, granddaughter of Robert Logan Jack the famous surveyor. Felicity has written the most wonderful book about her grandfather, RL Jack. If you haven't read it, you must. Exceptionally well researched with family history chart included. The Society has one available for members to read. We also have sitting on our shelves Esma Rigby's book, 'With Pick, Shovel and Dynamite' an interesting tale about the Finnish road builders in this area. Very well researched and written. Esma and husband, Jim gave an interesting insight to how it all came about at one of our meeting nights. We spent a lot of time looking at the many photos Esma managed to find when researching. Another excellent story for reading. These would make wonderful Christmas presents for that special person.

I attended the unveiling of 'Dave' the Elasmosaur at Chillagoe on Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> October. Well worth going to see. An invitation was extended to myself to help kick off the Mayor's Christmas Appeal by attending a Champagne Breakfast at Bridges recently. A good morning was had by all.

Members will be attending a seminar in December here in Mareeba, so pleased with the number who put their hand up.

Last but definitely not least, our Jack and Newell website should be up and running before Christmas. Log onto [www.mbahistsoc.org.au](http://www.mbahistsoc.org.au) click onto the Jack and Newell button and you'll be in. Lots of stories for people to add to if so inclined and heaps of information. Thank you Suzanne and Carol

Time to wish all a very Merry Christmas and the Happiest, Healthiest and Fulfilling 2010 year ever. Be prepared for hard work.

Helen

## **FROM THE EDITOR**

This will be our last publication for 2009. It has been a busy year, and I have made it through my first year as editor of the Mareeba Memoirs (three out of four editions). As the database record of our library is on hold until we get our new computer, I haven't spent a lot of time going through the collection, but every time I go down to the Historical Centre, I am amazed by the treasure trove that all our members have access to. Adding to the library database will go a long way towards my journey of discovery.

Did you know that we have scrapbooks underway on a range of different historical subjects? Lots of old newspapers are waiting eager eyes to scan them for articles on our area, the people, the services and the happenings. I have adopted a scrapbook on railways—no surprise there—and have started combing through the files and old papers to come up with articles past and present to add to my scrapbook.

Keen to adopt a scrapbook on your subject of interest and put it together? It is a great job to do when television is boring and your library books are all read. See Helen at the Historical Society and she will tell you what you need to do..

We are still hoping to co-ordinate a Writers and Reciters club in the new year. I attended a writers session at the Yungaburra Book Fair, where we heard from writers and poets—some published, some unpublished—and it was wonderful to listen to them speak of their struggles and their successes.

Helen and I will be going over to

Ravenshoe to sit in on the weekly get together of their Writers Club to get a feel for what goes on.

### **People of Historical significance.**

*“Until a young society like ours begins to honour its antecedents, we are still itinerants, our roots haven't gone deep enough into the earth and we can be uprooted too easily.”*

**Diane Cilento, March 2007**

Christmas cards are on the stands, dates are being negotiated for Christmas parties, lists are being made, the last term of school is well underway and so is our Christmas raffle.

I hope you enjoy the clothes line poem (see page 12) it brought back vivid childhood memories. I am going to indulge in nostalgia now as memories flood back of mum firing up the copper on wash day. What a chore washing was! It took up at least the morning, sometimes all day, with the fire under the copper having to be stoked up regularly (heaven help dad if he hadn't chopped enough firewood). Mind you, I guess it depended on the type of wood and how long it would last—would it burn down to long lasting coals that would keep the copper water simmering? Or would it dwindle away to ash too quickly? When the clothes had been boiled in the copper for the required time, mum used to lift them out with a big stick (a broom handle I guess), let them drain, then they went to the cement wash troughs under the house to be rinsed. The washboard was there in all its glory (how children wonder as they see one today in museums) and so was the old hand wringer. Women of those times must have had very strong backs and arms, it is no mean feat to lift saturated sheets out of a copper boiler with a stick, transfer them to the wash tub, rinse them, wring them by hand or with the hand turned wringer and get them out to the clothes line to dry. Once the washing was dry, in it came, clothes to be ironed were damped down and wrapped in a towel, then ironed at some stage during the day. I remember watching mum doing the ironing initially with the Mrs Potts irons that were heated on the stove, and tested carefully before being eased over the garment to be ironed. Irons were swapped to and fro as the one she was using cooled off. How did these ladies manage not to get scorch marks on their immaculately ironed garments? Mum eventually graduated to a kerosene iron but it was a frightening and dangerous business, and many times the iron was flung out the window when its little kerosene tank caught fire! Like the clothes on the old clothes line, a well ironed garment was considered the sign of a good housewife.

*The sun dries without prejudice  
the garments of both rich and poor.*



## Rail Ambulances in North. Queensland



Stephen Yates, in his article on the rail ambulance in the Mareeba Heritage Museum, *"Saving the Locum-motive"* in The Sunday Mail Sept 22 1996 describes rail ambulances as looking like a cross between a London bus, a World War II Blitz truck and a railmotor—clearly something from another age. These ambulances were often the only way to get sick or injured people from a remote areas into a centre for medical help. Rail was the most reliable form of travel during the wet season when lowlands started to flood. Cost was another factor for using rail services and the transportation of nursing staff and patients involved a gang of railway workers on a hand trolley.

We take so much for granted these days; dial 000 and call the ambulance to take you to the nearest hospital! Not so in the early days of settlement in the area. Roads were substandard, not many were bitumised and during the wet season, the rail ambulances were often the only reliable way to transport sick or injured people to the nearest hospital.

Information from the database of JW Knowles 1990 tells us that Chillagoe Railway and Mines allowed its three light rail motors (earliest of which was believed to have entered service in 1913) to run in cases of illness from Almaden to Chillagoe. There is no record of a specific rail ambulance in that area. Rail wasn't a fast, efficient or comfortable mode of transport for all concerned and especially for people sick or wounded, but the rail ambulance got the job done.

The first known ambulance car ran between Anakie and Emerald, then a small unit was commissioned in 1914 to run on the two-foot gauge Innisfail Tramway and a second unit was provided at South Johnstone, also on the tramway. In 1917 Hamilton Engineering Works build a railcar for the Babinda Ambulance Centre using a small motorcycle engine mounted on a simple flat car.

These units were rough for the patient being transported, and didn't have the range or speed required in an emergency.

The cottage hospital at Mt Molloy had a rail motor ambulance to operate to Mareeba by 1929 but this had gone by 1940 and no details are known of its whereabouts.

In John Kerr's book "Triumph of Narrow Gauge" he says that local ambulance brigades were permitted to build light rail cars to provide a better alternative". A fine example of this is the 1942 Mareeba RA. This first rail motor ambulance in Mareeba was built in 1942 by Ambulance Superintendent Noel Parker who was a fitter and turner. This rail motor ambulance had 4 wheels, a 5hp JAP engine and was on a platform 9ft 8 inches long, covered by a canopy. It was displaced by the second Mareeba rail ambulance, a 1926 Dalby RA (Citreon) bought from Dalby in 1946 for \$400. It was transferred from Mareeba to Mt Mulligan where a new shed was built to house it. From there it went to Almaden as a feeder car. The second Mareeba car was also transferred to Mt Mulligan and when mining ceased there in 1957 it was sent to Almaden where it was last used in 1961. The third and largest rail ambulance used in Mareeba was bought from Atherton Dairy for £25. It was in poor condition and Queensland Rail foreman Carl Zehiten rebuilt the engine at Mareeba.

The new body was built at Townsville in the Queensland Rail Workshops. The ambulance began its working life on Anzac Day 1949, operated for 2 years and travelled 19,300 km.

It stayed operational until 1974, was used to evacuate Chillagoe Hospital during the 1974 North Queensland floods, was not used at all from 1976 to 1979 but was kept running right through the 1980s by the Queensland Ambulance Transport Brigade .

We were lucky that determined Mareeba locals made sure that the ambulance ended up in the Heritage Museum here in Mareeba which is where I first saw and admired it. It is hard to imagine that it was still running in 1983 when the QATB ran it to Chillagoe. In their prime, some of the railway ambulances travelled tens of thousands of miles each year. But as more country roads were sealed, the frequency of use of the railway ambulance declined. By the 1950's some vehicles saw years pass without any use, and that was the beginning of the end. Many were donated to the local folk museums in the towns where they were last posted, others disappeared without trace.

Queensland's railway ambulances played an integral part in the transportation of sick patients. Seven examples survived until today and we are fortunate enough to have two in our area, one in the Mareeba Heritage Museum., and one in the Tin Pannikan in Herberton.

#### SOURCES:

Mareeba Historical Society

YATES Stephen. Saving the locum-motive. Sunday Mail Sept 22 1996

## I Remember When....

I first visited Herberton to stay with my in-laws, Edna and Joe Collins. They lived in an old Queenslander up on Breen St overlooking Herberton. Joe was a timber cutter and when we arrived, he was cutting an order of sleepers up on the Dargo so we went up to see how it was done. Trees were cut into sleepers with a Hargen circular saw, Joe would use the adze to dress the sleepers and Edna's job was to bark the logs. All the sleepers and the stumps were branded with a branding hammer that had the timber cutters brand. Adzes were used to cut the beds for the railway lines and broad axes were also used in the splitting.

My husband Kev Collins remembers going out as a kid to off-side for his dad Joe. Their camp usually consisted of a lean to made of corrugated iron and stringy bark poles. They cooked over an open fire, and used carbide lights that burned with a clear bright light. The carbide was covered with water and created a gas and when the jets blocked up you would have to heave the lamp outside in case it exploded. Life in the forests cutting timber was fraught with dangers large and small. Kev remembers the big scorpions, snakes and rats, and always having to be on the lookout for things that bite. Below is one of Joe's favourite little bits of poetry that is applicable to these times. It is probably a few lines by AB. Patterson. One of you poetry buffs out there will surely be able to enlighten me and even better give me the name of the poem so I can find it.

*"Where the wiry free selector walks in armour plated pants  
And defies the stings of scorpions and the bites of bulldog ants".*



## A POEM

Author unknown

A clothes line was a news forecast  
To neighbours passing by  
There were no secrets you could keep  
When clothes were hung to dry.

It also was a friendly link  
For neighbours always knew  
If company had stopped on by  
To spend a night or two

For then you'd see the 'fancy sheets'  
And towels upon the line;  
You'd see the 'company tablecloths'  
With intricate design

The line announced a baby's birth  
To folks who lived inside  
As brand new infant clothes were hung  
So carefully with pride.

The ages of the children could  
So readily be known  
By watching how the sizes changed  
You'd know how much they'd grown.

It also told when illness struck,  
As extra sheets were hung;  
Then nightclothes, and a bathrobe, too,  
Haphazardly were strung.

It said, 'Gone on vacation now'  
When lines hung limp and bare.  
It told, "We're back!" when full lines sagged  
With not an inch to spare.

New folks in town were scorned upon  
If wash was dingy gray,  
As neighbours carefully raised their brows,  
And looked the other way..

But clotheslines now are of the past  
For dryers make work less.  
Now what goes on inside a home  
Is anybody's guess.

I really miss that way of life  
It was a friendly sign  
When neighbours knew each other best  
By what hung on the line!

All of this thinking about means of transport reminded me that before railways there were horses, coaches, rest houses and coach staging posts. What a part horses played in the exploration of our continent. On the subject of horses, I read an interesting article in a Veteran and Vintage car magazine, can't remember the author, but it was all about how the horse lost out to the motorcar.

Cars were not the most reliable mode of transport in the early days, but when compared to the disadvantages of the horse, especially in the cities, you can understand why they took over as the major way to make our way around.

Horses had one large disadvantage in towns and cities, and that was dung. Imagine London where the large establishments could have as many as 60 horses to meet their transportation needs. According to the article, each horse could regularly produce about 20 kg of dung a day so at the turn of the century, English towns and cities had to dispose of some 10 million tons of horse manure every year! Imagine the flies, imagine the health issues! Imagine the smell! To cross a road in the city if you had your best clothes on meant paying a crossing sweeper to clear a path, because the roads were only cleared once a week.

Around this time in the USA, New York and Brooklyn had a horse population of about 175,000 overworked and often ill-treated horses. If they dropped dead on the street, they were left to rot. In the 1880's New York City was removing some 15,000 dead horses each year. Poor old Dobbin just had to be replaced, and so the motor car was embraced with enthusiasm. And on the subject of horses.. there was also the amount of productive land that could be put to better use (like growing produce to feed the population) instead of being used to grow horse fodder. Cars proliferated and the horse was put out to pasture.

***Did you know: If a statue in the park of a person on a horse has both front legs in the air, the person died in battle. If the horse has one front leg in the air the person died as a result of wounds received in battle. If the horse has all four legs on the ground, the person died of natural causes.***

## Mary's Christmas Cake

If you like a moist, light Christmas cake that you can eat also as a Christmas pudding, this is for you. I cook it in a greased and floured loaf pan.

250 grams mixed fruit (can include dates—yum)

1 packet glace cherries roughly chopped

250 grams butter

1 teaspoon bicarbonate of soda

1 cup water

1 cup of gin/wine/port/alcohol or anything alcoholic from your cupboard.

Mary even uses Mothers Ruin (Gin)!

A little vanilla essence

1/2 cup of slivered almonds, or chopped macadamias

1 to 1 1/2 cups SR flour

1 to 1 1/2 cups plain flour

3 eggs



Mix together fruit, sugar, butter, bicarbonate of soda, water and alcohol, vanilla essence, almonds and cherries in a saucepan.

Heat on the stove until boiling, then remove and cool.

Mix in the eggs

Add the flour slowly, mixing as you go.

Cook in a slow oven on 150 degrees for 45 mins to 1 hour depending on the cake tin you use. Remember, to know if a cake is cooked, slide a sharp knife into it. If the knife comes out clean, it is cooked. Alternatively, press the cake softly. If it springs back into shape, it is cooked.

## CREAMY BRANDY SAUCE

1 cup vanilla ice cream

2 teaspoons cornflour

2 teaspoons water

300 ml carton thickened cream, whipped

2 tablespoons icing sugar, sifted

2 tablespoons brandy

Melt icecream in pan over low heat, stir in blended cornflour and water, stir **constantly** until mixture is simmering and thickens. Remove from heat, fold in cream, icing sugar and brandy. Serve warm.

PS This is never enough! You need to at least double it!

## 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—2010

#### 2009

November: 26<sup>th</sup>

December: No meeting

#### 2010

January 28<sup>th</sup>

February 25<sup>th</sup>

March 25<sup>th</sup>

April 22<sup>nd</sup>

May 27<sup>th</sup>

June 24<sup>th</sup>

July 22<sup>nd</sup>

August 26<sup>th</sup>

September 23<sup>rd</sup>

October 28<sup>th</sup>

November 25<sup>th</sup>

December No Meeting