

# Mareeba Memoirs

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Raising the telegraph pole. Picture from Wikipedia.

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### MEETINGS

General monthly meetings held on the **FOURTH** Thursday of each month **EXCEPT** December.  
Meeting dates on Page 9.

### MEMBERSHIP FEES:

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

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**FROM THE EDITOR** The replica of the Endeavour was in Northern waters during June and July, a wonderful reminder of the extreme bravery and commitment by explorers setting out on a voyage of extraordinary magnitude. The historical events that followed are of great interest to any of us curious about how we came to settle these shores. The article by Irene Shanks enlightens us on the multiple purposes of Captain James Cooks epic voyage of discovery and is a stark reminder of the dangers faced by the whole crew. Communication strategies that are so advanced today were not discovered then, and the trusty Endeavour was Cooks only way of getting back to England to pass on the knowledge accumulated during this daring voyage. The readings from Captain Cooks journals continue on the ABC until 22 August 2011. Tune in!

Communications is big news again, with the National Broadband Network well underway. North Queenslanders can look forward to a better service and our old landlines will become a part of history. Let us hope that there will be big improvements with the NBN giving Australia the opportunity to sharpen its competitive edge in the worldwide marketplace. The task will not be as arduous as the one faced by those hardy souls sent out into the wilderness to find a route to establish a telegraph network to connect the country. These intrepid souls battled the harsh environment of the outback while often having to find the resources to complete the task.

Lorraine Edwards letter in this edition reminds us that the convicts and immigrants in Australia didn't have it easy either. They had to wait for boats to come from England with mail and supplies, and didn't have the luxury of quick and reliable communications. From these early bases, exploratory parties set out with pack mules, no beaten track to follow, just determination, the lust to find greener pastures, and a love of adventure. So it was for men like Frederick Walker and his party who set out to find the most viable route for a telegraph line from Cardwell to Normanton. Some of the old telegraph poles from that era still stand, a mute testament to the determination and courage of those men who set out to "find the way", and the women who, during the early days followed their men into the bush and lived in tents or rough huts. When we think about our early explorers, we probably ask ourselves "could I have done it?" I don't think it was for the weak hearted, but a great challenge for people with the spirit of optimism and adventure. Enjoy the read. Joan

Being an avid family historian she realised that Mareeba did not have a historical society and as family history and local history become entwined she thought it fitting to try and commence one. Thirteen people attended this inaugural meeting with apologies from four others. It was quickly realised that a society could be a viable proposition and so a steering committee was formed. At that time and for a long time after, the meetings took place at Mareeba Information and Support Centre (M.I.S.C.) then at 199 Walsh Street. This was the start of a lot of hard work and all members were keen to see the society go on to bigger and better things. HKC.

It is good to see our society being sought out by people like Tom Freeman (see story below) as we establishes a reputation for collecting and sharing invaluable records from the past

#### Tom Freemans visit by Helen Kindt

Thursday 28th at our general meeting night, guest speaker, amateur historian Tom Freeman from down south, gave an interesting, informative and an inspiring talk on Stannary Hills. Tom talked for well over an hour and had us all spellbound with his knowledge of that area. The amount of research he has undertaken is mind-boggling and the number of hours spent doing so, must run in to the 1000s. He had maps, photos, and archival materials laid out on our huge table for us to check out, look at and exclaim over. In all a most wonderful experience for us. We thank Tom Freeman for his time and effort in bringing this information to us. Alex, Judy, and Jim Mitchell deliberately journeyed to Mareeba from down south just for this one evening, I know they were not disappointed. Tom also drove them around to many places that both their families had been ae in, giving them an insight and experience that not many others have had the opportunity to have.

It was disappointing that not one of our three local newspapers ihought fit to place the Society's Press Release in any of their publications.

Again Tom Freeman, many thanks for a wonderful evening.

The party travelled over 1300 miles in eight months and surveyed a possible route for the proposed telegraph line across lower Cape York with Normanton being selected as the hub for commercial development in the gulf. Because of its coastal location, the town we know as Karumba was chosen to be the point of connection to the international cable. The geographic isolation of the Gulf country and its inaccessibility made it almost impossible for this area to be viable although the telegraph line went ahead and the race was on. There was a lot of political manoeuvring during this time with South Australia and Queensland at odds about where the cable should come ashore. Darwin was the obvious choice from the South Australian point of view. A determined South Australian Government appointed Charles Todd as Superintendent of Telegraphs to construct the Overland telegraph line from Adelaide to Port Darwin, with a timeline of 18 months. There were problems with the South Australian endeavour including a larger than usual wet season in the far north. An expedition party sent to Port Darwin bogged down, and starvation was imminent. Unbelievably, the Assistant Engineer R.C. Patterson took a party across to the Roper River and sailed in a tiny skiff across the Gulf of Carpentaria, up the Norman River to Normanton at a time of year when severe tropical storms were always a threat. They then went on to the telegraph station at Gilbert River to let the South Australian Government know of the impending disaster. The end result was that the Queensland telegraph line to the Gulf of Carpentaria saved South Australian's bacon, amid political manoeuvrings and controversy. Darwin assumed the mantle of commercial centre to support the increasing discovery of mineral wealth in the northern regions. The construction of the Overland Telegraph Line from Port Augusta to Darwin was completed in 1872 to link up with a submarine telegraph cable which had been laid between Darwin and Java, to connect with the extensive British telegraph network thereby linking Australia to the rest of the world. The telegraph line from Cardwell north opened up communications and opportunities in the North for Queensland. I drew extensively on the excellent resource listed below for information for this story.

*Singing Strings* compiled by Ray Langford.



### ***Captain Cooks Voyage to Northern Australia*** ***By Irene Shanks.***

When 1st. Lt. James Cook left England with a crew and passengers numbering nearly 100 men in the HMB Endeavour, he was sponsored by King George III, The Royal

Society, and the Royal Geographic Society as the voyage was primarily a scientific voyage. He left Plymouth in August 1768, sailed west across the Atlantic, around Cape Horn, across the South Pacific and arrived in Tahiti on 13th April 1769 in time to build the forts necessary on 3 different islands to observe the Transit of Venus across the Sun on 3rd June. The observance of this phenomenon was the key to measuring the universe. From the measurements gained the orbits of Venus, Earth, Mars could be computed. Four hours before the Transit a native Tahitian 'borrowed' a quadrant! Even the unflappable James Cook was distraught. With the help of the native 'Chief', it was returned in time. The observance was not 100% successful because of the atmosphere around Venus which did not give a sharp measurement.

Secret instructions were then opened and Cook travelled south and took nearly 6 months to chart the coastline of the two main islands of New Zealand. This was another scientific first. Communication is words and Cook and his sailors learned more Indigenous vocabulary in seven weeks than most Australians in our lifetime.

Mr. Banks was responsible for collecting and preserving some 17,000 specimens, most of them unknown to the world, but his habit of tearing out pages of other people's books when he ran out of paper for his specimens, did not make him very popular.

It truly was a scientific voyage as well as a voyage of discovery. Cook headed north and met with uncharted land at a point he named 'Point Hicks' and stayed for 8 days at a bay he first called Stingray and then Botany Bay. His voyage continued to chart the land and was uneventful until he named Trinity Bay and sailed into the area now known as The Great Barrier Reef.

Late on the night of 11th June 1770 regular soundings failed to warn them of the closeness of a reef and suddenly they were stuck, they had not only hit a reef but had been carried by the high tide over the ridge and into the hollow beyond. They were some 12,500 miles from England, completely isolated on uncharted seas with no communication with any other peoples. And they survived.

A couple of weeks later Lt. Cook and Mr. Green his astronomer, observed what they called the 'immersion of Jupiter's first satellite'.

The prototype of the first marine clock to fix longitude had been shown before Cook left England but none were available. Calculating longitude was therefore difficult but necessary. Galilei Galileo had first suggested observation of the eclipse of Jupiter's first satellite as a method of fixing longitude in the early 1600's and it was known as 'The Heavenly Clock'. A table of the eclipses of Jupiter's first satellite was carried by Cook who knew at what time it occurred at Greenwich and this enabled him on the Endeavour River to fix his position.

When Cook left the site of what was to become Cooktown, he carried with him a vocabulary of nearly 50 words of the local indigenous people.

**Below is a reminder to people to tune in the ABC .**

The ABC Local Radio will be broadcasting excerpts from Cook's Journal daily from **8th June until 22nd August 2011**

These are short segments (1-3 mins) and will be broadcast just before the 9 a.m. news.

Cook arrived at what became Cardwell on 8th June 1770 and was in the Far North for 11 weeks, he left the Far North on 22nd August 1770 at Possession Island.

The 'readings' highlight history and the circumnavigation of Australia by the HMB Endeavour Replica which arrived in Cairns on 24th June 2011.

## 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

### A REMINDER OF MEETING DATES FOR 2011

August 25 AGM  
September 22  
October 27  
November 24

### Ticket Selling—Help Urgently Needed

#### IGA Sundays

August 14th, 21st, 28th  
September 4th, 11th

#### Between National Australia Bank and Mareeba News

Sept Thurs 1st  
Wed 7th  
Thurs 15th  
Wed 21st  
Thurs 29



I found this letter displayed in a Historic Society Museum at Bunbury W.A. in 2009. I was interested because a branch of my family tree also arrived at Fremantle on 4th Jan 1843 to take up a position with The Western Australia Company, as an architect/surveyor at Australind, near Bunbury. This is their story.

Frederick Sherwood, wife Jessie, their three children, chattels and furniture including a grandfather clock still in the family, arrived not knowing The Western Australia Co was in severe difficulty and was soon to fold. No-one was there to meet the family, and the job seems not to have eventuated.

Fremantle was a dismal spot, little more than a large encampment on windblown sand, with stunted bushes, insects and large rats. Any accommodation if available would be too expensive longterm, so we imagine they joined the ranks of tent or bark hut settlers for some time. The primitive conditions must have been a bitter shock to Jessie, who gave birth to their fourth child within a few weeks, in Fremantle. She would have empathised with the writer of this letter. Jessie was thrown out of a horse drawn vehicle and killed, their daughter Jessie took on the caring role. Frederick never remarried, the family lived in the house he had built in Perth. Beside clerical work for the government he established a school, had agricultural pursuits with his sons, and established the Swan Brewery Lorraine Edwards

*My dear Aunt*

*We have now been three months in our new home and I shall endeavour to tell you what we have been about during that time.*

*We are getting rather tired of the necessary disorder & confusion of a Tent. The first fortnight was rather disagreeable, it rained a good deal & our tent leaked in all directions. John had to hold umbrellas over us during the night.*

*We had almost nothing up from the ship to eat or drink out of & our discomfort & misery was extreme. The wet sand under our feet added greatly to our annoyance.*

*Your affectionate nephew, W. Australind, March 1843.*

**Did you know?** Bendigo goldfield was found by a woman named Margaret Kennedy who saw gold in the creek bed in September 1851. She and a friend washed gold using a bread making tin. Within a few months, there were about 20,000 people searching for gold in that area.

**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.

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, 11 and 111.