

Mareeba Memoirs

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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 1st July each year.

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From the Editor

Australia in the 1870s

Bananas were first grown in Queensland.

Woodchopping became a competitive sport in Tasmania.

Song of the year. "Safe in the arms of Jesus".

Our population was 1,648,000

Our population is expanding, times are changing and to us older Australians, it has become a bewildering world in some ways. It is always a shock when we mention something from our past that was a big event in our time, to have the younger members of our society look at us as though we are just daft old buggers.

Having said that, there are exciting things to look forward to. The Olympic Games are coming up. Hopefully they will be peaceful, but with the British forces putting anti aircraft missiles on the roofs of buildings, maybe it may be safer to watch it on TV. At least we have that option now, back in my childhood, we hunched over the radio and tried to listen through the static to what was happening. I remember having to tiptoe past my grandad when the cricket was on. He and my mother were both cricket fanatics.

We are all busy down at the Historical society, our books are slowly going onto the database, great donations are rolling in, and lots of visitors pop their heads in the door to see what we get up to. Remember that we are open Tuesdays and Wednesdays, plus market Saturdays. We always love to see new faces, and optimistically hope for someone to say "do you need a hand?" This memoirs I have flown by the seat of my pants a bit and the blokes may think it is a bit too concentrated on women's issues, but that's how the penny fell this time. Anyone with a story to tell would be most welcome. Remember that I am a relative newcomer to this neck of the woods and would love to hear your stories of yesteryears. Hope you enjoy the Memoirs for May. Editor

Words of wisdom

I was always taught to respect my elders, but it keeps getting harder to find one..

The CWA—In the Beginning

An open Conference for countrywomen was arranged by the Brisbane Women's Club in Albert Hall, Brisbane in August 1922. The Country Women's Association was formed for Queensland with their motto being:

*Loyalty to the Throne
Service to the Country,
Through Country Women,
For Country Women,
By Country Women.*

The QCWA is an organisation in which "*All members are on an equal footing, united and firm in the purpose of bringing all women together and making life brighter and better, or, at least, less wearisome, for those whose lives are spent in the distant Queensland bush*".¹

No money was asked for from Government, independence from outside influences meant that members could state what they believed were the difficulties of conditions for country women and their families. The belief of those involved in the formation was that if women were assisted in gaining self confidence and education they would not only improve the condition of their own life, but be able to become better educated, improve their family health, and lobby for better communications and transport facilities. Organisations like the CWA are part of the fabric of our rural history, recognised more in the bush and country towns than in the cities and like many of our service organisations, it comes into its own in times of need. The publicity that the CWA gives an impression that the main interests of the organisation are in judging cakes or running the tea rooms at country shows but the truth is that their staunch support and steadfastness through hard times is legendary. It has been interesting to see the renewed interest in the organisation over the past few years. The CWA members in one Queensland coastal town did a letter box drop when its membership dropped to about 4 members and were amazed at the response to their plea for more members. TV channels are most likely to broadcast shows that stir the memories of the importance of organisations like the CWA—in times of need.

The 15,000 members of the QCWA each gave a penny a week during World War 11 to send food parcels to beleaguered Britain. It doesn't sound much now, but it amounted to something then", said the current state president Mrs Dorothy Mathieson, who was a young member during the war. "CWA women did everything. They made papier-mâché hospital equipment, ran dances for the soldiers, knitted thousands of socks, pullovers, balaclavas and other items. They mended hundreds of uniforms, ran rest-rooms, raised money, visited hospitals and entertained the mothers, wives of children of soldiers fighting overseas. We regard ourselves as the Silent Servicé. We don't seek publicity. But I feel that if the QCWA hadn't been there in WWII, it would have left a hell of a hole in the social fabric of Queensland".

One North Queensland CWA member recalls her father illegally retained his short-wave radio. The radio was able tune in to reports virtually from the front line, and as the Japanese advanced, the surrounding farming community depended on him to warn them when to evacuate. There were no telephones in the area. The farmer's house was topped by a very high flagpole. Every night after the daily broadcast, farmers would emerge from their homes to look for the flagpole. A powerful torchlight atop the pole would trigger a mass exodus to South Australia. It was never necessary, although the farmer was on the verge one night when he heard that a fleet of Japanese warships was coming. But it was turned back. This story came from "Passages of Time" by Alex Martin in the Cairns Post . What a source of information about the North these articles were. I find them particularly relevant because I have not lived here all of my

Frustration is trying to find your glasses without your glasses!
Every morning is the dawn of a new error.
I just got lost in thought. It wasn't familiar territory

In 1941, the creation of the Australian Women's Army Service opened up opportunities for thousands of Australian women. The service recruited women between the ages of 18 and 45 and during the war a total of 24,026 women enlisted. The AWAS had 71 barracks around the country. They were paid wages equal to two-thirds of the male equivalents. The AWAS had their own rank and administrative arrangements and reported to the Chief of General Staff. The service was established to allow certain soldiers to go overseas to fight. Women proved so good at their jobs that the opportunities increased and women took on a much wider range of work. They were cooks, clerks, anti-aircraft observers. They drove ambulances and trucks, they repaired trucks and worked on tanks and they rode motorcycles as despatch riders.

The AWAS initially served in Headquarters and Base Installations, and later in almost all Army Services. 3,618 served with the Royal Australian Artillery and they manned the Fixed Defences of Australia from Hobart in the South and Cairns in the North, and Perth in the West. 3,600 served in the Australian Corps of Signals Officers and other ranks of the Australian Intelligence Corps were involved in (and commended for) their highly secret work. Motor transport drivers had truly varied lives driving cars, ambulances, trucks (up to 3 tons), jeeps, floating jeeps, Bren Gun Carriers and amphibious vehicles.

Discipline was tough, but the camaraderie among the AWAS women was strong enough to last 50 years. The AWAS Association is open only to World War II women soldiers and Queensland alone had 715 members. A total of 36,000 women served in the AWAS during the war, ranging from 18 to 45 years of age and came from all walks of life. They were the groundbreakers as far as women in the Army are concerned. They were prevented from serving overseas until 1945 when the government relented and allowed some AWAS to serve with a detachment being raised for service in New Guinea making them the only non-medical women's service to send personnel overseas during the war.

A second AWAS contingent was assembled in Queensland for service on Bougainville, but the war ended before they could sail from Australia.

The Gravy Train

I lived for many years in the bush -far out- and I starved for lack of rain

Till I slipped the yoke that had kept me broke and caught the Gravy Train;

Now the bridle may rot on the stockyard rail, the shovel in the drain,
And the crowbar rust in the yellow dust, or ever I work again.

The ringers shall strive with the starving stock, but I will not be there -
I'd rather the pub than the gidyee scrub, and I'll weep in my icy beer
When I think of the years I left behind, of the futile fruitless fight
To wrest a home from the stubborn loam, before I saw the light

We are the "backbone of the land", the politicians say,
There's plenty of sweat and a ton of debt—but bloody little pay;
There's flood and fire and dust and drought, tears and an overdraft,
A worn-out wife and a wasted life, rewarding all the graft.

So I've got a job with the Council mob and I live in a house rent free,
And I drive from the bar in a council car, when I go home to tea.
The cattle may die by the dried-up dam or perish on the plain,
The bank may sweat about the debt—I'm on the gravy train.

Prior to the funeral service the undertaker came up to the very elderly widow to ask, "

How old was your husband?"

"98" she replied. "Two years older than me". "

So you're 96?"

She replied, "Hardly worth going home, is it?".

I felt like my body had got totally out of shape, so I got my doctor's permission to join a fitness club and start exercising. I decided to take an aerobics class for seniors. I bent, twisted, gyrated, jumped up and down, and perspired for an hour. But by the time I got my leotards on, the class was over.

Sayings from your Secretary.

Having collated the information from our recent survey, it has been agreed to trial a WEDNESDAY morning General Meeting commencing on 23rd May starting at 8.30am. BE THERE! Bring a friend and enjoy a cuppa afterwards about 9.30/10.00 or just call in to say 'Hi'.

Some where in the body of the Memoirs will be information from our MDO, Jo Wills. This is going to make it easier for us to organise our thoughts as well as our files, folders & accessions. The plan is to apply for a grant so we can engage a Significance Assessor to access our holdings, so not only do we know what we hold, but most important we know the historical value as well. Most important is that after this happens, applying for grants to purchase material to conserve and preserve these important items will be made "easier".

DO YOU KNOW

Our Society holds literally hundreds of maps, some are of the previous Mareeba Shire towns but mainly of Mareeba town dating way back.. We even have a couple of lovely blue prints (literally) from Woothakata Shire, so take a guess on how old are they? Come on in and take a peek.

A plea to all our book readers out there; we do need different stock for our Second-hand Book Stall we run each Mareeba Market Day. So if you have or know someone who has books lying around gathering dust, **PLEASE** please donate them to us. The money comes in extremely handy to help pay our bills. As you know, our Society is entirely self-funded and not-for-profit so fundraising plays a most important part of the running of the organisation. Please help as much as possible! Keep your ears and eyes wide open!

People are required to transcribe elderly and fragile documents we hold. Its NOT hard work and we will can even train you if needed. A willing heart and a pair of hands is all that's needed. It's a great way to learn about the history of this vast shire.

One of our younger members, Sam, a very clever artistic teenage girl, is painting a bright sign to be used on Market Days. She has also composed a flier which will be printed up and distributed to people attending Market Days, informing the public of just some of the materials our society holds. Thanks Sam, appreciate your efforts.

Watsonville will be celebrating Pioneer Women's Day on Sunday 3rd June, social time? Qld History Day falls on 9th June along with Mareeba Market Day of which there are 2 that month. We will be staying open that day till at least 3pm to compliment the Information Centre's pageant. Fun for all, so join us!

Am always here for a chat, cuppa & to discuss what work you want to do to help our organisation.

Take care,

Helen

Comments from our MDO.

During the completion of the thematic mapping process, the following key historical stories were identified as relevant to us in our activities. It is envisioned these, along with the identification of special sub collections will assist in the process of assessing our collection.

Our Collections.

Mining Activities.
Tobacco Industry.
Coffee Growing..
Cattle Industry.
WW1 and WW11..
Mareeba District.
Mareeba Rodeo.
Story of Jack & Newell.

Special Sub Collections.

Glass negatives WW1 + Mareeba area.
Mining documents.
Former Woothakata Shire Council silky oak table and chairs.
Jack & Newell Ephemera Collection.
The Fossett Collection covering a large range of mediums & themes.
Slim Pearsall Collection covering a large range of mediums and themes.
Bill Short Collection specific focus on tobacco.
Bill Crowther Collection specific focus on Mt Carbine Mine.

These will be discussed from time to time in our Mareeba Memoirs so all will kept up to date with happenings in this society.

A grant to hire an assessor to do this valuable work is in the pipeline. We will not know the outcome of the grant until later in the year. By obtaining a qualified assessor and closely following the advice given, further grants to enable us to do follow up conservation work will be made simpler.
So everyone, fingers crossed!

Still needed! People to assist the days the Centre is open. PLEASE!

RESEARCH ENQUIRIES

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

NON-MEMBERS: A minimum fee of \$44 for a 2 hour search then \$22 per hour or part thereof afterwards for researcher to search. \$16.50 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 fee is paid.

Mareeba Historical Society meetings are held the fourth Thursday of each month excluding December.

MEETING DATES FOR 2012

February	28th
March	28th NB SEE SECRETARY SAYINGS
CHANGE OF DAY AND TIME>	
April	25th
May	23rd
June	28th
July	25th
August	22nd
September	26th
October	24th
November	28th
December	No Meeting

**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 <i>Republished Aug 24, 2007</i>
<u>MAREEBA HISTORICAL SOCIETY PUBLICATIONS</u>	
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, II and III.