LOCAL RESIDENTS ABOUT TO “BE IN THE SWIM”, possibly in the Coral Street pool. 
Can you identify them? (Answer: See Page 2)
March 2018

Featuring:

Captain Chaplain David de Venny Hunter

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President’s Column 8

Crawford House Museum Exhibition Program 2018

“Be In The Swim”
11 March - 20 May 2018
Watersports and Athletics in Ballina Shire
All forms of water sports including swimming, water polo and surfing.
Stories, photographs and memorabilia associated with people of Ballina Shire

Answer: Mrs Anne Strong with Russell and Rhonda.

Woodcrafters Exhibition
June 29, 30 and July 1

Airing of the Quilts
July 6, 7, 8

Alstonville Plateau Historical Society Inc.
Established 21 October 2001 • ABN 14 079 187 469
Affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society

CRAWFORD HOUSE MUSEUM & COMMUNITY RESOURCE CENTRE:
10 Wardell Road, Alstonville—02 6628 1829 (Fri & Sun)
Email: info@aphsmuseum.org.au
Website: www.aphsmuseum.org.au

Museum: Open Fridays 10–4.00 pm and Sundays 1–4.00 pm
Research Centre: Open Fridays 10.00–4.00 pm

PATRONS: K Hogan MP, T George MP, Cr D Wright, Mr P Silver

SOCIETY’S AIMS:
To collect, preserve, display and provide documents and photos of a historical nature of the Alstonville Plateau and Ballina Shire for current and future generations.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS:
3rd Sunday of each month at 2.00 pm
Alstonville Community Resource Centre
Crawford House, 10 Wardell Road, Alstonville
(Guest speaker and general meeting)

CORRESPONDENCE & ENQUIRIES:
The Hon. Secretary, Alstonville Plateau Historical Society Inc.,
PO Box 65, Alstonville NSW 2477
Phone: 02 6628 1829 (Fri) • Email: wmyryan1@gmail.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS:
Due 1 October each year
(Includes public risk insurance and quarterly newsletters)

Fees:
Single $20; Family $40; Student $5
(Please add $5.00 if newsletters are to be posted)

Corporate Membership: $100.00 p.a.
(Incl. newsletter advertisement and full membership)

President: John Sim - jdsim47@yahoo.com.au
Past President: Ina le Bas - macbas@iprimus.com.au
Vice President: Ian Kirkland - iankirkland@bigpond.com
Hon. Secretary (Mins): Liz Marshall
Hon.Secretary (Correspondence):
Margaret Ryan - wmyryan1@gmail.com
Public Officer:
Brian Worthington - bnbworth1@gmail.com
Hon. Treasurer: Lyn Green - lyneth51@hotmail.com

Volunteers Co-ordinator: Jane Gardiner - gardiner2477@gmail.com
Research Officer: Alison Draper - alisondraper@bigpond.com
Publicity Officer: Cathy Cohen - kerrycohen@bigpond.com
Committee: Gwen Clark, Belinda Burnet
Crawford House & CRC Booking Enquiries:
John Sim - jdsim47@yahoo.com.au
Webmistress: Liz Marshall - ltmarsshall41@gmail.com
Past-Presidents:
Marguerite Fuller, Jane Gardiner, Ian Kirkland, John Sim, Ina le Bas
Captain Chaplain David de Venny Hunter

Chaplain David de Venny Hunter aged 41, was killed in action 28 September 1917 at Polygon Wood, Belgium. The place of burial was the Hooge Crater Cemetery (Plot II, row F, Grave No 16), Zillebeke, Belgium.

Wollongong and when they left there they proceeded to their home at Cobargo. They had two children Kathleen Merle in 1906 with the birth registered at Deniliquin and Angus Lachlan in 1910 registered at Cowra. A third child Winston Richmond was born but I haven't had time yet to find the birth.

David was appointed to the Ballina Circuit in 1914 based at the parsonage in Ballina and his parish took in Newrybar, Knockrow and Alstonville. Rev Hunter during his ministry wrote many a letter to the newspapers in favour of the Temperance movement. He also felt very strongly about WWI and enlisted on 24 August 1916. He was accepted and appointed as a Captain Chaplain 4th Class at the time of his enlistment. He joined the 55th Battalion, AIF.

A letter that DD wrote to one of his Cowra parishioners dated 2/3/17 stated: “…..Only two minutes ago I said goodnight to your son Jack, he has been in my cabin spending the evening with me. I got quite a shock when he came in and said that he was Jack Bentley. The Jack that I remember was a curly headed wee chap; is still the same Jack and he is looking well and healthy, full of life and activity. …..what a great number of men have come from Cowra. You will also be pleased to hear that Jack’s early training is standing him in good stead. He carries his Bible in his tunic – the one presented to him in Cowra – and I am pleased to note that it is well worn. …….We shall all be pleased when it is over and we can return to our homes and loved ones once again.”

In the Australian Red Cross Society Wounded and Missing Enquiry Bureau files, one informant stated that the Chaplain “was a splendid man and did more for the boys than any three other men. He was most popular and had no enemies.”

Lieutenant (Rev) Herbert Green, 55th Battalion sent a beautiful tribute to the character and work of DD and Lieut. J Bowran, who recently fell in France. His letter throws additional light upon the influence of good and godly men in the battle-line. …. Padre Hunter was sent to us to be our Chaplain. It was January, and we were on the Somme! …..David Hunter immediately gripped the difficulties and applied every ounce of his consecrated gift to ministry to men in the hours of their greatest trials. ….. Immediately behind the firing-line and as close to it as he was permitted to go he established a soup kitchen, where he had ready at all hours of the night hot soup, coffee, cocoa, and cigarettes for men of our brigade, as they wearyingly dragged themselves back to camp when relieved.

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from the trenches. Everything he did in this way was
done with such grace and cheer that men instinctively felt
that it was done in His name. ..... When the full story of
these months of devoted service is told it will readily be
recognised that David Hunter was one of the ideal padres
of the war. He met his death through over zeal on our
behalf. The newspapers will have told you how we scored
a succession of great victories in strenuous fighting in the
Ypres salient in September and October. Our battalion
was in the van of this throughout. We had pushed on
another mile and were holding on for five days against
heavy counter attacks. The Padre was visiting the as they
entered the C.C.S., but became over anxious
concerning us, and made his way to battalion H.Q., 500
hundred yards behind the front line. The colonel kept him
until it was considered fairly safe, but he had only tra-
versed a few hundred yards on his return journey when a
shell took him. He died instantly and painlessly ..... The
whole battalion mourns his loss.”

One of his last letters home which was published in the
Methodist 27 October 1917 stated ..... “I was sincerely
sorry to hear that three of the boys from our Ballina
congregation, who left during my ministry there, have
fallen. William Wooten was a local preacher there, and
the influence of his life in the 4th Battalion still lives. This
soldier and saint, “being dead, yet speaketh.” Archie Lang
was killed doing an heroic action. He was stationed in a
safe bay with a machine-gun, and with a corporal, he left
his safe position to help some other machine-gunners
who were having a bad time, and while helping them
he was killed. I have not heard the details of Joe Lang’s
death.”

There is correspondence in DD’s file that relates to a
gramophone valued at £10 that was despatched but did
not arrive back in Australia. It seems to have been lost in
transit around Calcutta. Mrs Hunter put in a claim and
the shipping company claimed that they would only pay
£5 so she ended up accepting that amount. All the records
that DD used on the player arrived home because they
were in a different consignment.

Reverend Joseph Woodhouse paid tribute in The
Methodist on the 10 November 1917 to David de Venny
Hunter as follows: “...D D H was one of the brightest and
most popular of our ministers. His natural qualities of
cheerfulness, courage, sympathy and candour were added
to and beautified by grace. He threw himself wholeheart-
edly into his work. He loved his people and toiled for
them. In turn, he was loved by the little children and the
aged saints, and the man on the street felt drawn to him.
He was a man of public spirit: entering into the life of the
districts where he was stationed. He was a fearless fighter
for Temperance and Protestantism. The war stirred his
soul, and he offered to go as Chaplain long before the way
opened. If the determination and courage of any one man
could have defeated the enemy, no man could have been
more qualified than David Hunter. He was one of the best
and most successful chaplains sent from these shores.”
Lieutenant Rev Herbert Green speaks of him as the
“dinkum padre. He makes good all round. With the
men he ensured his fame for ever by establishing padre-
run soup kitchens, where fatigued men returning from
trenches need most cheer. At the same time that he
handed them soup he ladled out good Scriptural advice
and ‘strafed’ them for cursing the elements. He knows
how to preach to them, too. The officers have plenty of
time for him. He is always organising for the battalion,
and saves the major heaps of worry.”

The Methodist church called on all Methodists of New
South Wales to help set up a fund to assist in the purchase
of a home for Mrs Hunter and her three children and to
help any similar cases that may also arise. They purchased
a home in Sydney for them and the fund was eventually
wound up when it was no longer needed.

In the Ballina Methodist Church there is a brass plaque
on the front of the pulpit to say that the pulpit was the
gift of the Masonic Brotherhood in memory of Chaplain
David Hunter whose mortal remains lie in a Flanders
Cemetery. Well-beloved David Hunter!

Alison Draper

The officers of 55th Battalion, AIF.

Back Row L-R:
Chaplain David de Venny Hunter;
Lt Campbell, LCO; Lt Murray, Divisional Intelligence Officer;
Lt R H Wilkin, Assistant Adjutant;
Lt Smith, Assistant Quartermaster.

Front Row L-R:
Major Hugh Alexander Whyllie, AMC;
Major E W Stutchbery MC & Bar, 2IC;
LT Colonel Woods, CO;
Capt N E Pinkstone, Adjutant;
Capt C B Gow MC, Quartermaster.
Next Exhibition
Be In the Swim

Our next exhibition is designed to celebrate the opening of the new pool in Alstonville, which we believe is close.

We won’t reveal all we have on display but it includes photographs of “wild swimming” places and reminds us that the move for a town pool started in 1932 after a young girl, Zena Armstrong, was drowned in a water hole at Campbell’s Creek Alstonville (Northern Star 27/1/1932 p6). Today we would say she had been “wild swimming” but in those days she had no choice.

Photographs show that before 1975 those who swam in creek pools often took their own life saving devices.

(Photograph of the Daleys at Tosh Falls) Construction of the long awaited 1975 and 2018 pools are also shown in photographs. (Photo 1975 pool and 2018.)

But not all the exhibition is centred on photographs. We have been loaned a wonderful selection of male and female swimwear dating from the 1930s to the present. Items come from a variety of sources including the collection of Rhonda and Robert Weis, the Port of Yamba Museum and APHS members.

So be in the swim and visit our latest exhibition opening March 11th 2018.

Jane Gardiner

Vincent and Kenneth Daley - Tosh Falls 1952

Alstonville Pool 1975

Pool Revamp
In the 1880’s the local Member of Parliament, Mr Thomas Ewing, made an appeal to the Minister of Mines, Mr James Fletcher, to select a site for an experimental farm in the Richmond, Tweed Rivers area. Mr W S Campbell was asked to choose a site and in May 1886 he started an expedition to secure a suitable location. The trip on horseback and foot took six weeks and covered between 600 and 700 miles. Mr Campbell’s description of the district over 100 years ago is worth quoting in brief: “I found very little clearing of ground had been affected. The fertile volcanic soil was covered with the most luxurious vegetation of huge trees and dense undergrowth. Many of the roads of access were narrow tracks like tunnels bored through the vegetation. The district is simply magnificent and its natural fertility is almost unequalled. Nearly all of the county of Rous is admirably adapted, when judiciously cleared, for the rearing of cattle, horses, pigs and possibly some form of sheep, for dairying, for fruit and a great variety of economic plants.”

After selecting land at Marom Creek, in 1894, Wollongbar became the second Government Experimental Farm to be founded in New South Wales after Wagga Wagga. The original selection of 106.5ha was covered by dense rainforest vegetation referred to as the “Big Scrub”. This area was covered with “a dense growth of saplings, wild raspberry, inkweed, Scotch thistles, and other plants, which in many places formed almost impenetrable thickets presenting anything but an attractive appearance.”

In the first year, land was cleared “to plant a number of canes and other plants received from Kew Gardens (England)”. Despite water having to be carried half-a-mile in buckets, all but one of the cane varieties survived and the following season surplus sets were distributed to local growers.

Experimental work in the first few years of the farm’s existence dealt almost wholly with plants. A great variety were tried, including subtropical species, cereal crops, crops for oil and fibre, sugarcane, pulses, fruit and vegetables. Trials with pasture grasses, legumes and fodder crops were also undertaken.

Livestock was first mentioned in 1898 when an Ayrshire bull, imported from New Zealand was received at the farm. The initial experimental work on stock was on the disease tick fever, but in the early years of last century the emphasis shifted to dairying where it was to remain for many decades.

In accordance with the emphasis on education, a large two-storeyed wooden accommodation building was constructed in 1901 and the first students were enrolled in March 1902. Commencing in 1911, young boys from Britain came to Wollongbar as part of the Dreadnought Scheme. These boys received agricultural training for three to six months before moving into the local workforce.

Activities at Wollongbar between the wars continued along the same general lines of cattle and pig breeding, experimentation and education. Great pride was taken in the farm’s Guernsey cattle and Berkshire pig studs with animals regularly and successfully shown at the Royal Sydney Show.

After World War 11 there was a gradual move away from the studwork as the farm became much more orientated towards research. Early work involved the initiation of research into problems associated with the decline of soil fertility and the establishment and utilisation of legume-based pastures for the local dairying districts.

In the 1960’s the station was involved in pig-production research and the development, in conjunction with CSIRO of a breed of dairy cattle (Australian Milking Zebu) suitable for tropical climates. In 1968, the Regional Veterinary laboratory was established to provide a diagnostic and research service for the animal industries of the North Coast.

In the 1970’s an extensive building program commenced which was to transform the station. Old buildings were demolished and new laboratories, offices and research facilities were built.

In the new century, as part of the Department’s rationalisation and consolidation program, the Chemical Residue Laboratory at Lismore was closed in December 2004 with staff and functions transferred to Wollongbar. The Fisheries Aquatic Habitat Unit was relocated from Ballina to Wollongbar in June 2005, with upgraded office accommodation provided in the Administration Building for eleven staff. Following 106 years of continuous production the Wollongbar Dairy closed in June 2005 with 105 genetic performance cows transferred to Camden and 27 heifers transferred to Tocal.

With over 110 years of service to the local, national and international community, Wollongbar Primary Industries Institute – renamed in July 2008 to reflect the presence of fisheries officers – is continuing to provide high quality research, advisory, regulatory and laboratory services.

(From NSW Dept of Primary Industries 2010)

Brian Worthington

www.aphsmuseum.org.au
AN OLYMPIAN TO THE RESCUE

The Bronze Medallion I gained in 1948 when I was in Sea Rangers (Senior Girl Guides), while the Bronze Cross and Bar to the Medallion came a year later in 1949. As you can see, I gained them as a teenager when I was still Miss Miller.

We trained several nights at the harbour baths at Balmoral, Sydney, under the direction of a Miss Dot Llewellyn and finally took the exam in the North Sydney Olympic Baths. I’m glad we didn’t have to do the testing in the open ocean!

Just a funny little anecdote that you may get a laugh at. The distances (100m each for Bronze Medallion and 150m each for the Bronze Cross) of freestyle, backstroke, breaststroke and sidestroke had to be swum fully clothed. Cossies on underneath of course. Then we had to take off the clothing in the water. Part of the exam was then to duck dive (surface dive) down six feet to retrieve an object on the bottom. We had all done this successfully.

Also training at the pool were the Olympic team and at the time of our disrobing they were sitting around the deep end of the pool watching us. By accident one of our girls, after taking off her clothes inadvertently dropped her knickers which sank to the bottom. We all unsuccessfully duck dived for them but where this all happened was 8-9 feet deep and we just couldn’t get down that far. After much trying, and amusement on the part of the Olympians, one of their number (and I think it was Jon Konrads) retrieved them for her and handed them back. Both the Good Samaritan and our Ranger were very red in the face!

JOAN GANDY

(Editor’s note: the actual medals and story can be seen in the “Be in the Swim” exhibition).
SECURITY
Dominating events since the last Pioneer have been the ramifications of the vandalism experienced at Crawford House in the days leading up to Christmas. Four veranda windows were broken followed by an attempt to damage the house by fire.

Fortunately our alarm system prevented this eventuality. We were very pleased with the prompt response from Summerland Security and grateful to those members who also responded so quickly.

Initially, concerns were felt for Sue Harper’s beautiful Christmas decorations but we thank Sue for allowing them to remain in place (along with the burnt vinyl smell) until the scheduled end of the exhibition.

The Executive examined quotes for a further upgrading of our security systems but it was decided to discuss these matters with Ballina Council staff. Jane and I explained that the considerable costs of window screens and a new perimeter fence could not be contemplated by the APHS unless Council was prepared to grant us a longer-term lease.

Meanwhile Council has fitted a replacement LED sensor light high up on the back wall of Crawford House. We thank them for this and their willingness to assist us to cover the $800 bill for the repair of the windows.

Another result of the pre-Christmas break-in has been that we are now very explicitly stipulating to people providing items for display during exhibitions, that those items are not covered by our insurance policy.

Accordingly, we are very grateful to those members who have provided many items for our forthcoming “Be in the Swim” exhibition.

INSPECTION
Recently, Crawford House and the CRC were inspected by three Council employees as part of a Shire-wide audit of council-owned properties. The group commended the APHS for the splendid condition in which we were maintaining and presenting their property. We are very hopeful the Council staff will take some action to preserve an original piece of bull-nosed veranda roofing on the northern side of the house.

DREADNOUGHTS
A couple of weeks ago I met with members of the local Dreadnought Association – a group that is winding up after 44 years of activity. A Memorandum of Understanding has been reached with the APHS as we were deemed “to have some over-lapping interests” with their group. Assets (including records, stocks of publications, finances and library resources) are to be transferred to our society after some items are given to the State Library of NSW.

The memorandum states that the Dreadnoughts should have a special page on our website. I see this as something that will further enrich our website. Recently, Liz Marshall and Geoff Gardiner have linked a Dreadnoughts blog-spot to our site.

A formal wind-up and hand-over by the Dreadnoughts will occur at one of our forthcoming monthly meetings.

OTHER MATTERS
It was very pleasing to have some positive feed-back regarding Bev Felton’s story about her grandfather in our December issue. Members stories are always most welcome, and I strongly suggest you search out Joan Gandy’s story in this edition. Joan’s story is one of many that are featured in our new exhibition that will open on March 11 and run through till June.

Finally, it is equally pleasing to note that we have acquired thirteen new members since our October AGM. Gwen does great work in making these people feel welcome and Treasurer Lyn is also pleased! Several members of this group have already undertaken extra duties.

So, a very warm welcome to the following: Susan Austen; Nancy Mason; Hendrika Johnson; Gary Walsh; Janelle Watson; Wendy Sharpe; Neil Johnston; Louise Fulton; Rosemary Weaver; Gloria Cunneen and Chris Mogielnicki; Oline and Duncan Richards.

JOHN SIM

Alstonville Plateau Historical Society provides a service to the public to research enquiries into the history of people, places and events relevant to both the Alstonville Plateau and Ballina Shire.

The Research Centre is open Fridays 10.00 am to 4.00 pm or by arrangement, and it is recommended that prior to a visit you contact us either by email (info@aphsmuseum.org.au) or at the Research Centre so we can send you our research form and ensure we have a member to help you.