

value is his capacity to allow new voices and perspectives, particularly from rural Australia, to enter the historical narrative.

Few of us were familiar with the city and suburbs... The stableman told [the strike-breakers] to 'let the horses have their heads, they'll bring you back from anywhere'.

Crawford is convinced, from his conservative local viewpoint, that the violent, communist-inspired IWW ignited the strike stating that 'many unionists were unaware that they were being used by communists to further their aims'. It is documented that a National party politician travelled to Alstonville in 1917 – introducing the IWW as a plot to compromise the home front. Crawford's predisposition is somewhat supported by Scott. However, due to his urban context, Scott claims:

The IWW was not a natural growth from Australian trade unionism; it was a foreign invention whose promoters were at variance with unionism of the orthodox type.

Crawford utilises narrative structure to invigorate our scarce understanding of strike-breaker livelihood. He mentions soldiers with fixed bayonets and explains how:

Some volunteers carried revolvers and one carrier, who was attacked with an iron bar by one of a group of strikers, drew his revolver and the assailant was shot and died.

These recollections support Bollard's hypothesis of violence and radicalisation that pervaded the strike. In an interview for the Bicentennial Oral History Project, Crawford comments on hazardous working conditions for volunteers and the relentless protests by strikers. Crawford's narrative increases our emotive understanding of strike-breakers through descriptions of the journey to Sydney in railway carriages ('our feet were like ice'), camping at the Sydney Cricket Ground amidst a 'beer conspiracy', learning skills required to load the 'Boonah' vessel with supplies for the war and the disputed luck of those chosen to camp with elephants at Taronga Park. By referring to himself as a 'Crusader', fellow strike-breaker Norman Crawford insinuates the Protestant motives of some volunteers. These are vibrant and unique accounts, enriching the historical narrative, that would likely have been forgotten without a local historian. Local

history has the potential to exceed antiquarian stigmatism if it can embrace narrative history as an alternative means of communicating past events.

Crawford's parochial interpretation of the strike cannot solely be relied upon in the construction of national narrative. Furthermore, when researching a national event, the academic historian cannot be expected to understand the entirety of Australian local history. To resolve this paradox, the heterogeneity of local historians must consolidate their tangible experience of the past within broader research. To visualise this process, the national historian can picture their historical explorations as a walk down the Main Street of Alstonville. Whilst it would be impossible to examine every stone, the role of the local historian is to make sure the national historian does not miss any 'revisionist gems' in the gravel. By removing prejudices towards local historians, future co-operation can be encouraged and people from all walks of life will be given a voice in the historical discourse.

History belongs to us all and hence, is unequivocally judged by contemporary social conduct. Despite revisionism of the Great Strike of 1917 being hindered by the academic marginalisation of local historians, the fire has not gone out. By giving thought to the continuity of his context, Crawford has not only evidenced a radicalisation of the working class but also pioneered the democratisation of strike historiography. Local history, nestled beneath the wings of national history and retaining a grounding in empirical evidence gathering, has the capacity to bridge the schism with an intriguing perspective and narrative approach. Overcoming his tyrannies of distance, Crawford's legacy in Alstonville is reflective of that which local historians impart in all corners of Australia. A small voice in the expanse of our storied existence, Crawford challenges local historians to rally not just for the democratisation of the past, but for those that study it.

Finn Ball



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 10.00am to 4.00pm 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.



The PIONEER



The Photo that Sparked Finn Ball's Essay Award



Local volunteers pictured at the Sydney Cricket Ground during their efforts to break the Great Rail Strike of 1917.

On pages seven and eight is an extract from Finn Ball's HSC Extension History Essay Prize.

It was judged to be 'best-in-state'.

Guide lines for the competition required an historical investigation that focuses on an area of changing historical interpretation.

Finn chose to argue the case for the value of local history.

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March 2020

Featuring:

Local History:
'Tyranny of Distance'

NSW Oyster Reef Restoration Project

'Prisoners in Arcady'
German Marines in Berrima
1915-1919

In search of a farm

An unusual door stop

Crawford House Museum Exhibition

March 29 - June 26

Waste and Recycling
Then and Now
Getting it right

Exhibition in
collaboration with
Ballina Shire Council



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Affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society
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<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Crawford-House-Museum/237678339768274>

Museum: Open Fridays 10am-4pm and Sundays 1-4pm

Research Centre: Open Fridays 10.00-4.00pm

PATRONS: K.Hogan MP, Cr D Wright, T. Smith MP

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. We welcome stories, photos and family histories for our records and newsletter publications.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEETINGS

3rd Sunday of each month at 2pm
Alstonville Community Resource Centre
Crawford House, 10 Wardell Road, Alstonville.
(Guest speaker and general meeting)

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Marguerite Fuller, Jane Gardiner, Ian Kirkland, John Sim, Ina le Bas

Essay:

In Memory of Dorothy Crawford (1919-2018)

Academic condescension of rural local history threatens the foundations of our Australian historical narrative. Local history is capable of providing more than parochial and antiquarian services to national historians. It unravels the truths and experiences of tangible individuals, enriching our narrative with intimate, anthropological understandings of our past. Local historians are curators of community-sacred knowledge and yet, most are not trained in the discipline and rigour of the academe. A local approach to history (without interpretation or context) frustrates the academic, driving them to hide behind the battlements of footnotes and the peer-review process.

The uncomfortable chasm between the paradigms of local historians and academics is exposed within the historiography of the most dramatic industrial relations confrontation in Australian history – the Great Strike of 1917. The strike is embedded within the 'hidden history of Australia in WW1'. Robert Bollard writes:

As we peel off the surface layers of the onion, there are yet more layers of forgetting. The final layer, one that has eluded not just popular understanding but many academic accounts, is an ignorance of the full nature and extent of the radicalisation of the Australian working class between 1916 and 1919.

The industrial conflagration, involving around 100,000 workers, highlighted an ideological feud between socialist Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) and rising Taylorism within industrial management principles. The reaction of blue-collar workers to the strike reflected the camaraderie of soldiers and extreme unionist action placed immense pressure on the government. An upheaval of rural volunteers travelled from across the nation to sustain the home front in Sydney.

Ernest Scott's *Australia During the War* is the official national account of the strike. Whilst impressive, the work suffers from a 'remoteness from the lives of ordinary people' (potentially due to the initial censorship of primary sources). In particular, the voices of the rural, strike-breaker volunteers are silenced. Local historian Foreman Crawford, an Alstonville dairy farmer, wanted his voice heard:

I feel that I have a wealth of information that will be lost forever if it is not written down and preserved. Moreover, I feel a moral obligation to do so.

His book, *Duck Creek Mountain Now Alstonville*,

is an assortment of historical snapshots concerning the development of regional Australia and includes details of his experience as a strike-breaker. As a local historian, Crawford is positioned to augment and democratise the national narrative. However, one must ask: how can a history not adhere to a basic chronology or skeleton of source referencing? For the academic, it may be too easy to obey these constraints of conventional historical practice and classify Crawford as a primary source (with limited value to national archives). But, with this conclusion, the local historian is not content.

The 'tyranny of distance', a term popularised by Geoffrey Blainey, describes how national history has shaped a detached perception of historical events, such as the Great Strike. Firstly, a geographic distance exists between the humble laneways of Alstonville and the metropolis of Sydney. Crawford's rural, but educated, perspective brings new insights into historical interpretations of the strike, yet it also narrows his understanding of causality. Secondly, Crawford's colloquial narrative structure, common to most local histories, is a stark contrast to the analytical discourse of contemporary academic methodology. Whilst narrative structure improves the accessibility of history, a microscopic examination of the past may generate a problematic distance between historical construction and objective truth. For the credibility of local historians to be acknowledged by the academe, they must cross contextual and structural historiographical terrains. If they fail and local history is not exonerated from the shackles of condescension, contemporary historical practice will suffer a 'tyranny of distance' with its relationship to the past. If they succeed, future societies will have the capacity to ground themselves in a rich and accessible historical narrative.

For the modern Alstonville resident, *Duck Creek Mountain Now Alstonville* has timeless value. Nostalgia evoked towards well-known localities represents a deep chorographic connection between local historians and their milieu. In his recent book *Kin*, Nick Brodie uses his own family tree to explore Australian history. This mirrors the historiographical journey of Crawford who discovered that his 'own family story was so interwoven with the story of Duck Creek Mountain settlement' that it was effectively a local history in itself. Even so, these fabrics are ultimately torn apart when Crawford travels to Sydney. Crawford's

NSW Oyster Reef Restoration Project



Charlotte Jenkins at our meeting

Last year we were privileged to learn the latest information on the NSW Oyster Reef Restoration Project from Charlotte Jenkins, a Coastal Systems Fisheries Manager who was guest speaker at our monthly meeting.

Originally from Wales, Charlotte has been with the Department since 2005 and has undertaken extensive fish passage barrier audits in the Northern Rivers region.

She coordinated the state-wide Fish Friendly Farms project which was shortlisted in 2008 for a Banksia Environmental Award. She has also delivered a number of on-ground restoration projects.

In recent years she has coordinated the Habitat Action Program which has provided a focus on education, engagement and support of recreational fishers, in fisheries conservation and delivered on-ground habitat projects from wetland and acid sulfate soil management to creek bank restoration.

The NSW Oyster Reef Restoration Project aims to restore oyster reefs - one of Australia's most impacted aquatic habitats, and reinstate the many ecosystem benefits they once provided.

Charlotte told us that natural oyster reefs are good for our waterways. They provide food and shelter for fish and other animals, improve water quality by filtering and cleaning water, and protect shorelines from wave erosion.

But oyster reefs don't provide these benefits like they once did because they have almost completely disappeared in NSW.

In the past, oyster reefs were lost due to over-harvesting, disease, land reclamation and sediments from run-off.

The aim of this project is to restore oyster reefs in NSW estuaries so they can do their job again naturally.

The action will deliver the first large-scale trial of oyster reef restoration in NSW, study the best ways to restore natural oyster reefs, identify the most suitable places in NSW for reef restoration projects and explain why oyster reefs are important and how to restore them.

Can you help with information on this doorstep?



Mostly we think of old irons as door stops but this photo shows a Crawford House doorstep made from recycled tobacco tins (c1940s).

It was thought to have been made by local man Keith Scheef.

We would like to know how common or rare they were?

If you can help us to find out more please contact us on

info@aphsmuseum.org.au or 6628 1829 (Fridays and Sunday afternoons).

Chance Meeting led to the search for a farm

I met Arthur Forrester at the Genealogy Library at Goonellabah when he walked in to look for information on William Brumwell Forrester.

While he was getting help from the librarian, I quickly started his family tree right down to a generation before Arthur. I gave him what I had found and before we left he said that he intended to come in on the Friday and bring his wife with him.

Arthur said that he always wondered where the Forresters farm at Meerschaum Vale was located.

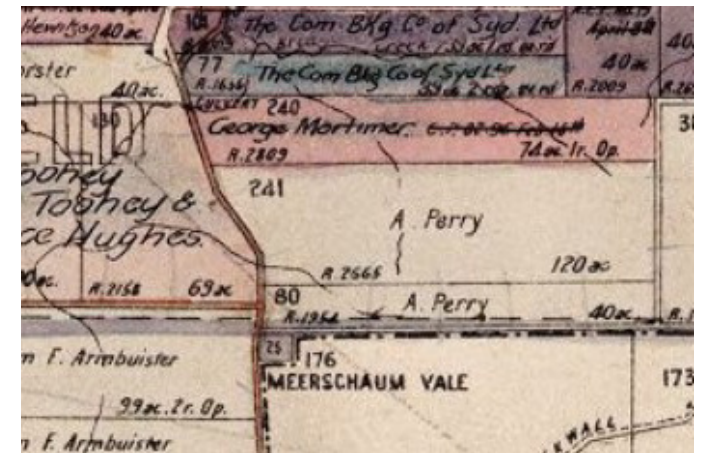
I found that the Forresters arrived up here in 1900, got the farm and retired in 1918 to Commercial Road, Alstonville.

Next day I was at the computer and was looking up the Parish Map Project - no luck - no WB Forrester on the maps. Plan B - I rang my friend who loves puzzles. By Friday morning I was looking for portion 240 with George Mortimer's name on it.

When Arthur and Dorothy walked in I had already printed off the full map on A3 paper. I snipped the 240 portion and pasted it onto an A4 piece of paper.

My friend was also able to tell me that the farm's next owner was a Spearing (two Spearing names appear as pall bearers for WB) and then it went to Hannah Elizabeth Forrester's name.

Hannah Elizabeth was William Brumwell's wife.



William Brumwell Forrester passed away in October 1937 and Hannah Elizabeth Forrester in January 1943 leaving one son Foster Forrester of Stokers Siding. Foster married and had three children (two girls and a son).

I also rang Barry Johnson of Meerschaum Vale to ask questions and left him thinking.

After Arthur and Dorothy left I contacted Barry again and asked him, if he remembered the Fords of Back Channel. He was thrilled as they were lovely people who were neighbours who always had a great vegetable garden and when they had excess vegetables he scored well.

Welcome to Arthur and Dorothy Forrester (nee Ford) who are two of our newest members. it is lovely to have you here.

Alison Draper

President's report

We have planned a very busy year for the society. At the moment several rooms in the house are being painted so there is some disruption. The painting should be completed by the end of the month just in time for us to host the first of the two Museum Chapter meetings which are held each year. This is in early March. Jane has compiled a list of exhibitions for the year. She really needs help with exhibitions, both with ideas and also with help in setting up and pulling them down.

As expenses rise in running the museum we have to try to find a WOW factor to encourage more visitors through the door. Remember it is your museum, not just a museum for the few of us who are on the committee. As well events for Sunday Arvo are also being put into place. These include a follow-up family history afternoon, a bus trip to

Yulgilbar Castle, a bus trip following the Booyong-Ballina railway, a return of Sydney or the Bush as requested after they performed last year, and hopefully a Bush Poetry afternoon involving Ray Essery and possibly a school students' reciting afternoon. A market afternoon for secondhand goods is also planned.

We should hear soon if we have succeeded in getting a grant for the fence. The 2019 Museum Year Book has been printed and is available for viewing in the house. Soon four of the committee will begin developing the management plan for the next few years for the museum. Finally Lois and Ruth had a successful trip to Glen Innes with the Frock Club with plans for more visits later in the year.

Ian

Thanks to everyone who contributes in some way to the success of our museum.

Prisoners in Arcady

German Marines in Berrima 1915-1919

While working on the APHS library I came across a book on Berrima (NSW) which reminded me of a visit to the Berrima District Historical and Family Society a few years ago.

A book, 'Prisoners in Arcady', written by John Simmons and published by the Society, tells how a large number of German internees and prisoners of war turned a country village into a show place and doubled the population between 1915 to 1919.

It was ironic that the internees, in the middle of the war, brought about Berrima's first tourism industry!

The internees and prisoners of war were mainly German merchant seamen, engineers, officers and NCOs from the German warship SMS Emden, and other ships sunk off the West Australian coast by the HMAS Sydney in 1914. Others were from German cargo and passenger ships seized in Australian harbours and from German shipping companies based in Australia.

Because of their maritime background, most of the internees spoke adequate English and had little difficulty in communicating. They were polite, well-behaved and it was their goodwill, ability and industry that the majority of the villagers came to appreciate. Also some of the families in the area were descended from German settlers who came to the area in the 1840s.

While the Berrima Camp was formally controlled by the Australian Army, the day-to-day management was left largely to the Camp Committee which was made up of internees in liaison with the Camp Commandant. The authorities allowed the internees a large degree of freedom and self-organisation.

The internees contributed to the local economy by purchasing bread, meat and provisions from local shops. Some rented houses for their families who



Bathing Enclosure

came to live near them. The internees also helped local residents to rescue animals, including a valuable

horse which had fallen into a large underground cistern. They helped to fight bushfires, once saving the Berrima School, and were often called on to remove snakes from houses.

One of their first contributions was the building of a weir across the Wingecarribee River, downstream



The Great Lake - Hansa Bridge in the background

from the swimming holes, thus creating a lake for swimming and boating. They became famous beyond Berrima for building a bridge across the river,



Home made boats on the annual river regatta day

creating gardens, with bathing huts made out of local materials along the river bank and making a flotilla of canoes and boats for fun on the water.

They held grand water carnivals with decorated

boats with prizes for the best ones, and swimming competitions open to everyone. Visitors from as far away as Sydney came to sightsee, swim, picnic and join in the fun.

Sporting competitions were organised to promote health and fitness. Work parties cleared and prepared the sporting areas and two large rented gardens to provide fresh fruit and vegetables for the village and their canteen.

Funding for the projects came from the camp canteen which was managed as a commercial enterprise. This enabled the purchase of vegetable seeds, the renting of grounds for the growing of crops, buying instruments for the camp orchestra and purchasing materials to make Christmas presents for



Mini-brig sail boat

the children of the camp. Funds were also used to employ internees who received no wages from their companies.

Education classes were established which included theatre, music, carpentry, joinery, shorthand, photography, English, sketching and painting. English was popular as all letters sent out of the camp had to be written in English.

There were classes on navigation and marine skills given by captains for juniors aiming to take qualifying examinations after the war. Wireless courses were popular as simple crystal radios could pick up local



'Villa Marcella' near the compound, left and 'Villa Marcella' today
The bridge is on the right



Hydroplane boat

transmissions. Often the internees knew the latest world news before the villagers.

Improvements to the camp were carried out by the internees including the introduction of a water supply from the river and the installation of a generator, years before the village received electric power.

Many of the shipping companies' shore-based employees had lived in Australia for some time before the war and had Australian friends who provided many books for the camp library. The committee also supplied books relevant to the various classes held and a comprehensive collection of German classics and general literature.

The objects they produced and used that remain in the BDHS collection reflect this diversity. Objects such as a framed memento also display the level of expertise of the internees and the amount of time they invested in cultural and artistic activities to keep themselves occupied and in good spirits.

P.S. The war ended in 1918, but the internees were not allowed to go home until the Treaty of Versailles in June 1919.

Morale amongst the detainees plummeted. The huts and the canoes which were going to be gifted to the people of Berrima were burnt in protest.

In 2015 the river walk, with signage featuring photographs of what had once been a hundred years ago, was opened to the public.

Photos. Berrima District Historical Society, National Library of Australia and National Archives.



Rosemary Weaver