

# *The* PIONEER



## PIXEL THE PAST PROJECT

John in full teaching mode with our newest member Finn Ball

OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF THE  
ALSTONVILLE PLATEAU HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.  
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March 2017

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## Crawford House Museum Exhibition Program 2017

### To 19 March: *The Way We Play*

The games and education of children: toys, books and games from the APHS collection and the Alstonville community

### 20 March - 17 June: *Loose Threads*

Original local textile and embroidery items

### 8, 9 10 July: *The Airing of the Quilts*

The tenth anniversary of this spectacular quilt exhibition

### 1 September - 22 October:

#### *140 Years of Alstonville Cricket*

Stories, photographs and memorabilia of cricket in Alstonville

### 17 November - 11 March 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



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## 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](mailto:info@aphsmuseum.org.au)

Website: [www.aphsmuseum.org.au](http://www.aphsmuseum.org.au)

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Crawford-House-Museum/237678339768274>

**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.

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

### 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:

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### 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)

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

## history is a journey ...

It has been almost nine months since the Pixel the Past story groups gathered together for our first workshop. Several workshops later, and on the cusp of our exhibition opening, I believe it can be concluded that we had a rewarding journey. Yes, we have got to the end and with nine new digital stories reflecting on our local history to share. But getting the stories exhibition ready has been the icing on a multi-layered cake.

Our completed stories are an important end result. After all shaping a story to have an engaging narrative is how we best communicate the messages and values that underpin an understanding of the past. As a champion of history, I value the past not least because it gives meaning to our existence here and now, but because it informs our contemporary thinking in positive and motivating ways, among other things.



### A PORT ARTHUR EXPERIENCE

The Pixel the Past stories are new interpretations of our local history and it has been no accident that we chose to harness digital media to do this. During a recent visit to the Port Arthur historic site I unexpectedly had one of the most moving interpretation experiences I have had. While fully engaged in observing the fabric of the newer of the two jails on the site an audio recording simulating the voices of the men that were incarcerated there echoed through the building's wings. These voices were not speaking, but singing; they represented the choir formed at the jail, with the aim of reforming their behaviour and lives.

At the time of hearing this audio recording I had been peering into individual cells to read the short biographies of some of the men. These were interesting written narratives, but were nowhere near as moving as hearing the deep tones of singing voices in this environment. The singing immediately humanised the men I was reading about and transported my thinking to the questions at the heart of the Port Arthur experience - were convicts evil brutes, habitual criminals, tragic victims of poverty and oppression or heroes of the class struggle?

[www.aphsmuseum.org.au](http://www.aphsmuseum.org.au)



### THE POWER OF DIGITAL STORYTELLING

Each of us may come to a different conclusion when thinking about such questions but my point here is about the power of digital story telling. Digital media can present exciting new ways through which to encourage the community to embrace and value our past, as well as broaden our audience. I know the young people we worked with were excited about looking at our local history through the prism of digital media; and as it turned out our buddies had fun working with this medium too.

The nine Pixel the Past stories that will be exhibited at the Northern Rivers Community Gallery in March and April are the products of a hardworking collaboration between young people from Alstonville High school, heritage buddies from Alstonville Plateau Historical Society and three region-based digital media practitioners - or mentors as we called them. Story groups imagined and researched their stories; our mentors imparted hands-on skill sharing to whip the stories into a digital format. Forming productive working relationships between story group members was key to the project's success. If group members didn't get on the project was at risk of falling apart - as none of us work at our best when we face troubles with our collaborators. Building rapport between group members was the key that would eventually open the door to a successful exhibition. I think we travelled well along this path. It was not however without some reservations or apprehensions from participants, but this was part of our journey.



*continued on page 4*



## INTER-GENERATIONAL LEARNING

At the project's inception, especially, apprehension was felt by all project participants. Buddies worried that students may not like them, students were curious about the possible age of their buddies, what they might look like, and would they have anything in common. Mentors were constantly thinking about the quality of the final cut, but nonetheless thoroughly enjoying the process. Few students knew anything about local history, but equally this knowledge deficit motivated their desire to participate in the project - and it was voluntary. Buddies were also unsure about engaging with new media - or digital technology - they'd heard about what a pixel was but didn't really want to be asked to define one. There was also much puzzling over the question of what a blog was! All these real human thoughts and feelings underpinned the motivation behind the project model of intergenerational learning. Everybody has learnt so much, not only about the past but each other and our place in our community.

So at the end of our project gestation nine new interpretations of our local history will enter the world. We invite you to take to the viewing of these works with the same emotion and curiosity offered to the arrival of a new family member - an open heart and mind that is appreciative of the hard work students, buddies and mentors have put into their stories. Each of the stories is the product of a unique collaboration between the story group members who were once strangers; and each of whom have differing traits, experience, perspectives and questions of the past. Some groups began with a firm knowledge of where they were taking their story - others have had to navigate twists and turns to reach their conclusions.

The Pixel the Past Project has been a most worthy educational journey and it has all resulted from the magic that stems from looking into and sharing our past.

KATE GAHAN



# No Person Injured In Pixel Project



The Drone

Drones, or unmanned aerial vehicles, were developed mainly by the military to carry out operations that were considered to be "too dull, dirty or dangerous" for humans. During the course of our Pixel the Past project, two groups thought it would

be a good idea if the location of their project was photographed from the air. The Environment group, working at Lumley Park, considered that their story should be told through the eyes of a bat! However climbing a tree to take photographs seemed like a dangerous option.

Fortunately one of our high school members, Jye, said he was getting a drone for Christmas and would be more than happy to use it for projects. So armed with the latest in technology and guided



Jye putting it altogether

by Susie, from Byron Bay Multimedia, we chose a day to film. That was not as easy as it sounds. The first few attempts were aborted due to rain and wind. On our final meeting day however conditions were perfect and Jye set up his drone in Lumley Park. As you can see he had a few directors but it was Susie who knew how to take shots from above the pine tree and have the drone moved at top speed of 11 kph.



Jye with  
"Student Directors"  
Finn and Salika

## Pixel the Past Project

A group of Alstonville High School students from years 9-12 have been working with members of the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society and digital media creators, Duke Albada, Karenza Ebejer and Susie Forster, to research and develop digital media histories from the Ballina Shire. Projects are almost complete and the finished products will form part of the youth week exhibition program at the Northern Rivers Community Gallery - held from Wednesday 29 March to Sunday 23 April 2017.

The Pixel the Past project was initiated by Ballina Shire Council and is supported by funding from the NSW Heritage Grants Program. The project is unique, as it has brought together young people, older residents and digital media experts to collaborate on the telling of local histories.

Students have attended a series of workshops led by professional, and shire-based, historian Kate Gahan. All project participants have found the project both thought provoking and fun; it has demonstrated the value in collaboration and inter-generational learning. Further, it has engaged students in our local history. Recent heritage projects undertaken in the Ballina Shire have shown that the community is deeply interested in understanding our past. Using digital media to tell heritage stories aims to make these stories readily available across the community; given the prevalence digital media has in our daily lives.



Groups at work

## Groups and their Stories

### Jye, Salika, Jane and Susie UNLOCKING SHEROO

Along with Europeans, Indian families settled in the Richmond River district in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Historically referred to as Hindoos, they worked as farm labourers, as well as established their own businesses. Sheroo Singh, whose story is told here, was among the district's early Indian migrant families.

Being non-European, unmarried and working class, written documentation about Sheroo is sparse. Revealing Sheroo's story has required the careful 'reading' of his cart and riding crop, viewing photographs and newspapers and collecting an oral testimony. Alstonville resident Elsie Johnston - now 101 years of age - grew up with the recollection that Sheroo "was always there" on her father's Uralba farm.

Sheroo's story is unique, but at the same time representative of the experience of Indian migrant families. Learning that he was a Sikh, whose custom was to wear a turban, certainly made him look different and his old spring cart confirms that he took the produce from his market garden to stores in Ballina.

Further, Sheroo's story highlights the importance of retaining the few surviving objects he left behind. Sheroo's spring cart, presently stored at Lumley Park Alstonville, is in urgent need of conservation care and clear signage.

Jye, Salika, Jane and Susie would like to thank the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society, Richmond River Historical Society, Elsie Johnston (nee Crawford) and Anna Johns for assistance with our story.

### Finn, John and Susie THE ECHOES OF LUMLEY PARK

This is the story of Lumley Park from its origins as part of the Big Scrub to its vital restoration through the work of William Ambrose Crawford from the 1930s until he was well into his 90's. Witnessed by the local flying fox community, this once extensive, dense sub-tropical rainforest that once carpeted the Alstonville Plateau area has been reduced to a mere 1% of its original size.

Lumley Park was first gazetted as a Recreation Reserve in 1901. A number of sporting clubs were established there over the next thirty years. In 1924 it was officially established as a Public Reserve and some ten years later Tintenbar Shire council set aside some of the park for preservation and regeneration. The work of Ambrose Crawford and his Scrub Reserve committee was well "before its time" and gained international recognition in scholarly journals. A centerpiece of our film is an interview with Ambrose's daughter Dorothy Crawford.

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Our story is told from the perspective of the Eastern Tube-nosed Bat (*Nyctimene robinsoni*). Locally listed now as vulnerable. Its Big Scrub was once home to a diverse range of flora and fauna.

Finn, John and Susie would like to thank the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society and Dorothy Crawford for assistance with this story.

### **Jahla, Baden, Jan and Duke**

#### **THE CHANGING PLACE OF NEWRYBAR**

Today Newrybar is a thriving rural-set village, located on the northern edge of the Ballina Shire. It is home to 460 residents – both long-term and recently arrived. The village is well-patronised by locals and visitors, flocking there to enjoy the food and shopping experiences it has to offer. In recent years also, its community hall has grown in popularity as a venue for community and family events. Newrybar's history and historic character is at the heart of its present day attraction.

Newrybar was gazetted a village in 1881, two decades after the Colonial government legislated that land could be selected and purchased in the district. This triggered the migration of farmers and others to the region.

A General Store, tinsmith and tailor, Presbyterian Church and Public School were among the facilities that were established during the early decades of the village. Some of the village's earliest buildings remain intact today; the village has also seen major changes across the decades, especially since the 1960s. The Changing Place of Newrybar reveals the layered history of the Newrybar village streetscape since its establishment.

Jahla, Baden, Jan and Duke would like to thank Lynette Foster and Tony Kibblewhite for assistance with this story.

### **Monty, Jack, Elaine and Susie**

#### **CRIME AND PUNISHMENT ON THE PLATEAU**

Built in 1902, the Alstonville Police Station has been an enduring government service in the town – both the police service and the original building remain today. The establishment of the station followed the turn of the new century, as well as calls by concerned citizens to police the 'fisticuffs' that had begun to occur in the main street.

With the growth of the population came the expansion of government and other services in the town, among these was the Police Station and the appointment of a resident police officer. The Federal Hotel was also newly established – 1901 – and indeed it was the reported cause of the troubling fisticuffs that raised calls for a police station. The role of the police in the village was to maintain law and order, to protect residents from the non-law abiding.

This story takes a look at a sample of the crimes committed in Alstonville during the twentieth century. Hoping to unveil the village's unacknowledged underbelly, a survey of Alstonville's past crime has turned up unusual, and somewhat humorous, examples – judging by today's standards. Laughter aside, the nature of past crime in Alstonville reflects the nature of the community that developed in the village.

Monty, Jack Elaine and Susie would like to thank the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society and Paul Parrington for assistance with this story.

### **Lilly, Jasmine, Amanda, Lois and Karenza**

#### **CARRY ON**

Until recent decades, the influence of religion in shaping the local communities was significant. This is reflected in the number of historic churches of these denominations that ornament our towns and villages.

Historically, religion played an important role in guiding the daily spiritual lives of settler communities. In addition, church activities brought families together socially, as well as serving philanthropic needs in the wider community.

Today, though religion has less influence and among fewer residents than in the past, churches in our community still carry out important functions established decades ago.

Carry On takes a look at the 'good works' – or in current day terms the 'ministries' – of several members of St Bartholomew's, or St Bart's, Anglican Church, most notably Annie King who wrote and published a cookbook to raise funds for soldiers wounded at war.

Jasmine, Lily, Amanda, Lois and Karenza would like to thank Alison Draper, Rev. Greg Ezzy and Maryanne Bienenke for assistance with this story.

### **Stephen, Sally, Emily, Richmond and Duke.**

#### **A MUSICAL SCHOOL**

Presented with the areas of culture and education, this group decided to focus on the Alstonville Public School Band. The band developed an outstanding reputation locally and large numbers of parents and ex-students will have proud memories of their many public performances. Searches were undertaken at both Crawford House and the school for photos, articles and even recordings of such events.

A centrepiece of the project was an interview with Neville Keevers, the long-time bandmaster at the school and we sincerely thank him for his cooperation. Former principal Des Burke was also able to provide material for the project.

The team would like to thank APHS Researcher Alison Draper for assistance with this story.

## **Hannah, Mobina and Karenza** **FEAR NOT – ARCHIE'S STORY**

In the early 1890s the Wollongbar Experimental Farm was established by the Colonial Government of NSW. Its aim was to experiment with different crops and animal husbandry techniques to guide the farming activity of those who had settled in the district. Since this time its roles has shifted overtime, as new needs emerged for government.

After WWI the Wollongbar Experimental Farm was offered to house and train boys brought to Australia as part of the Dreadnought Scheme. This scheme was one of a number of child migration schemes that operated in the early twentieth century to assist in placing youth in employment in areas where labour short-age existed.

Archie's Story is told through the eyes of a Dreadnought boy. His perspective is a composite story of the experience of the child migrant who came to Wollongbar between the years 1938 and 1943.

Mobina, Hannah and Karenza would like to thank the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society and Bob Smith for assistance with this story.

## **Sally, Rose, Roger and Duke** **BANK OF NSW ALSTONVILLE**

The former Bank of NSW, located on the western corner of main street Alstonville, is a gem of a building. It reveals some interesting and little known aspects of the district's history.

Constructed in 1921, the Bank was designed by architect Frederick J Board. He rose to architectural prominence in the district in the 1920s – Board designed many other important and prominent buildings across the region. The bank is a rare example of the timber constructed buildings he designed.

Local contractor Dayal Singh built the bank from local timbers. Many of the timbers used to construct were highly prized at the time.

Sally, Rose, Roger and Duke would like to thank the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society for assistance with this story.

## **Eloise, Tamryn, Cathy and Karenza** **SEARCHING FOR ANDREW CONNOLLY**

In the late nineteenth century, with the creation of towns and villages in the Richmond River district, churches and cemeteries were established by settlers of European background.

Migrants of English, Scottish and Irish descent brought with them their religious traditions of Anglicanism, Methodism and Catholicism. These were the dominant religions practised in the district. Cemeteries established were sectioned according to these traditions, so that those of the same religion were buried together and apart from those of other faiths.

The historic divisions of cemeteries according to faith remain evident when visiting our local historic cemeteries. Other 'traditions' or past social mores practised regarding death and burial are revealed through a closer look at the layout of our historic cemeteries. Searching for Andrew Connolly explores how his religious community felt about, and responded to, his death by suicide in the late nineteenth century.

Eloise, Tamryn, Cathy and Karenza, would like to thank the Alstonville Plateau Historical Society and Kerry Cohen for assistance with this story.

[www.aphsmuseum.org.au](http://www.aphsmuseum.org.au)



### **APHS Monthly Meetings**

**Community Resource Centre**  
**10 Wardell Road, Alstonville**  
**2.00 pm third Sunday of the month**

19th March / 23rd April  
21st May / 18th June

### **Youth Week** **Exhibition Program**

Northern Rivers  
Community Gallery

29 March - 23 April 2017

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### **Crawford House Museum**



*Featuring many interesting*  
*household objects reflecting*  
*family life from the turn of*  
*the century to the 1960s*

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## PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

### Toys Exhibition

In my last column I reported on preparations for the opening of the "Ways We Play" Exhibition. Now, some three months later I am writing after a quite exhilarating morning – and something of a first for both Crawford House and the APHS.

We have just hosted a visit by twenty youngsters from Possum Place Pre-school. Many thanks to Jane, Lois, Chris, Belinda, Margaret and Susan for your great work in entertaining, demonstrating and enchanting our visitors after their walk to the House through a steady drizzle!



Two boys from Possum Place taking a second look at the Dolls' Houses

What a great idea, Lois, to have so many hands-on toys available on the back verandah. The woodpecker, piano accordion and cash register had not had such a workout for many a long year.

As adult visitors had begun to dwindle in the extreme heat of January/February, it has been particularly pleasing that two pre-schools and 60 Year

1 students from Holy Family School, Skennars Head have arranged visits in the last weeks of this engaging display.

### Forthcoming Dates

At our January meeting, after a fruitful discussion, it was decided that the annual event thanking our volunteers for their support would move away from that busy (and hot) period at the beginning of December to a self-catered luncheon in our CRC in June/July. I will be able to provide more details in the next Pioneer.

Another change of date will be our April monthly meeting. As the third Sunday clashes with Easter Sunday, our meeting will take place on April 23.

Once again, we have accepted the Rotary Club's invitation to participate in this year's Antiques Fair on the weekend of

May 20-21. Helpers will be needed to sell our publications particularly as the Sunday clashes with our May meeting.

### Pixel the Past Project

As you can see, this edition is largely given over to reporting on the work of the High School students and mentors to present a story about each of their chosen themes.

Can I sincerely thank our members (named elsewhere in this edition) for their involvement in this project? I am sure that we have learnt something of the challenges of trimming down a mass of material into the structure of a three-minute film.



Kate addressing the Pixellers in a High School art room

The students have also discovered something about the wealth of research material available through our organization. Let's hope this leads to some younger APHS members in the future.

I would like to thank Kate Gahan for offering us the chance to become involved in this challenging project. Many thanks also to Stephanie O'Brien for allowing us to use Alstonville High's facilities and to Skye McNamara from the Council for keeping us so well fed!

### The Lease

Our last Executive meeting voted to accept Ballina Council's offer of a three-year lease for the APHS at Crawford House. We are currently assembling documentation to accompany a further request for Council to consider extending the length of the lease. It was pleasing to receive very positive backing from the Royal Australian Historical Society in pursuit of this matter.

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](mailto: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.

