



President's report

As year's end approaches we can reflect on another very busy year for the museum. The latest event we were associated with was Alstonville Show. While a presence is essential to make people aware of our existence, financially through book sales and raffle, the result was disappointing. However Alison's display was appreciated by many. The quilt raffle was won by Phoebe Sim who was quite pleased as shown by the accompanying photo. Second prize



Phoebe Sim with her quilt

went to Margaret (no surname) who has been uncontactable both by telephone and text message. We are still working on this.

Since the last Pioneer was published we have also had a stall in the Plaza. It was disappointing that it cost us over \$80 to have

the stall but we did sell a number of books and we also gathered some funny stories and made people aware of our existence.

I would like to remind members that membership fees are now due. We would greatly appreciate prompt payment.

Lois and Ruth have been negotiating with Mrs Christmas from Alstonville High School who has been keen to hold a display of the students' work at Crawford House.

They have been working with museum members to set up the display. The highlight is going to be a fashion parade on the front lawns of the museum on Saturday 7 December. Cost is \$10 which can be paid through Evenbrite or at the high school during school hours.

Those attending must bring their own chairs. Entertainment and catering will be done by students from the school. The museum needs to provide six members to be in the various rooms of Crawford House for about half an hour while they are open prior to the parade. If you can help please let us

know. Hopefully the event might bring some rain like a similar event in 2018.

A big thank you must go to all our volunteers who continue to make Crawford House Museum an attraction. I hope those people who attended the Volunteers' luncheon enjoyed the occasion.

One of my main concerns for the museum is having enough volunteers to keep the doors of the museum open on two occasions each week.

It really is a shame that we don't have enough volunteers to open more days a week as often if someone is at the museum on days when we are not open people see a door open and want to come in.

However at the moment we have only been able to open every Sunday because of a couple of our members who have been doing more than one day's duty a month. As these members are heavily involved in other aspects of the museum as well, and are often at the museum on three or four occasions in the week, I don't think it is fair to them. A handful of volunteers to help on Sunday would greatly help Jane with the roster.

A photographic Annual Report has been compiled and will be sent away for printing in December.

This will be a great record of events that the museum has been involved in during the last twelve months. Hopefully it will become an annual publication.

A copy will be placed in the library and another copy in Crawford House for your perusal while on duty. A big thank you to Jan Regan for setting the book up.

Congratulations to the new committee members for 2020. I particularly welcome Bill Boyd who has become Vice President.

I hope all members have a Happy Christmas and 2020 turns out to be a memorable one. Thanks to everyone for your support during the last twelve months.

Ian Kirkland

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



Seasons Greetings



May your Christmas be joyous
May you go in safety
May the New Year bring good fortune for you and your loved ones.

Australia's first post offices



Official Newsletter of the
Alstonville Plateau Historical Society
December 2019 • Volume 19, No 4



December 2019

Featuring:

Elsie Johnston's Photo Album
Researching the Black and Walker families
Frock Club and Alstonville High Schools TAS students

Crawford House will be closed from
23rd December to 3rd January 2020 for
the Christmas break

Crawford House Museum
Exhibition

'Designed to Inspire'

A collaborative exhibition between the
Museum's Frock Club collection and
Alstonville High School -
Technological Applied Studies
students

The Opening of the exhibition
will be a Fashion Show and
Garden Party on

Saturday 7 December 1.30 pm
Tickets \$10 per person
available from
Alstonville High School
weekdays from 9am - 3pm
Includes light refreshments



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PUBLISHED
MARCH, JUNE, SEPTEMBER, DECEMBER

The Pioneer Editor: John Sim 6687 8469

Please send all contributions to John Sim.

Production: Rosemary Weaver



Alstonville Plateau Historical Society Inc.
Established 21 October 2001 • ABN 14 079 187 469

Affiliated with the Royal Australian Historical Society
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Website: www.aphsmuseum.org.au
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, T. George 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)

CORRESPONDENCE AND ENQUIRIES

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SUBSCRIPTIONS:

Due 1 October each year
(Includes public risk insurance and quarterly newsletters)
Fees: Adult \$25; 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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Past-Presidents:
Marguerite Fuller, Jane Gardiner, Ian Kirkland, John Sim, Ina le Bas



Creek down stream from Sherroos

Unfortunately some photos are missing such as the Alstonville Junior Farmers at the Byron Bay Bacon Competition and photos of the Alstonville Show. Scenes from what Elsie says "is a creek a short distance from Sherroo's (presumably at Uralba)"



Wollongbar field day note Cyril having a picnic with tea pot?

are a mystery. Can anyone tell us where this creek is? In due course you will find Elsie's photographs in our MOSAIC catalogue.



Frock Club

Frock Club gets together with
Alstonville High School TAS
students



John Sim with Vanessa Christmas

When the 'sleek blue sports job' slid past me on the driveway of the local Op Shop, little did I dream that this would be the start of a joyful collaboration between Alstonville High School and Crawford House. As it turned out Vince ('sleek blue') and I were both exploring the Op Shop for design inspiration - now the title of the latest exhibition!!

This exhibition is all about the Museum's Frock Club supporting Alstonville High's TAS – Technological and Applied Studies which is managed by the ever-elastic minded Vanessa Christmas!

Hoping to see you at our collaborative Exhibition, Fashion Show & Tea Party,

Lois Hennes

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Elsie Johnston's Photo Album

Photo albums are very important in preserving our memories and telling our stories. They often reflect special events in our lives; they are unique and may reveal information that enriches our social history.

We have been loaned the album of Elsie Johnston's (nee Crawford) by her nieces Delma Daley and Pam Eggins. It is typical of its time and contains black and white photographs mostly from the period 1948 to 1953. Photographs document many local weddings, plus events like the opening of the hall at Lynwood Methodist Church, a field day at Wollongbar Agricultural Farm, the Coronation Day Parade (2nd June 1953) in Alstonville plus numerous images of her beloved Cyril. Not all are professional shots! Jessie Blanch's wedding is rather blurry but her sister Ella Blanch's marriage to "Mac" Gibson is much better.

Sometimes a scribbled note reveals humorous information. For example the shot of Cyril beside the big fig at Victoria Park has a scribble "Cyril six feet one inch...". Do we know the height of the fig tree?



Mac Gibson's wedding



Frank White's wedding



Coronation day parade 1953



Cyril beside the big fig at Victoria Park



Black Walker Connection

A friend of mine said to me, 'My mother is a Black and my Father is a Walker, so does that make me a Black Walker?' He said to me that he didn't know a real lot about his relatives and was there some way that I could figure out his tree?

Where to start: With yourself. Write that down. Who is your Father (full name) and his birthdate? Who is your mother (full name) and birthdate. Who are your Father's parents? Who are your Mother's parents? Now you have a start. Go to BDM NSW and go to Births. Put in your Father and his parents' names. The year; take a guess at the timeline and give yourself a large enough time space. Click on sort by father's name. If you leave out your father's name and just go with his parents' names in that area then you can usually come up with the children born to them. Do the same with your mother's parents. Now you are starting to get a family. Always note where you get your information. Now do your parent's wedding and their parents' weddings.

At this stage you can also go to Trove website. In the search area put in your grandparents' names – one part of the family at a time. Start by clicking on NSW or the other states where they may have lived. This is where you might even be able to pick up their wedding report or their obituary. I found a report on the grandfather trying to rescue a young fellow from drowning in Terania Creek. He didn't get to him in time before the young fellow went over the waterfall but he persisted and found his body. The Grandfather was awarded a lifesaving award. He never spoke about it and never told his son or grandson but it was reported in the local newspaper of that time. Now the family has a copy.

Never forget good old Google – Put the Grandfather's and Grandmother's name in and you may get a surprise. Do not take it for gospel – always check any information that you find. Always keep track of where you find information.

I have since found out that the Black side of the family was a large family of orchardists in the Dural area. Somebody has done the family up on a website called Australian Royalty and they were found via google and duly checked out correctly. John Black, described as a farm labourer, arrived in



Left to Right - Daughter Roxy, Glen (Bodgie) Walker and his wife Laurel

Sydney as a Bounty Immigrant on 2 Oct 1838 after a voyage on the ship 'Coromandel'. He arrived with his wife Jessie Dodds Moffitt and three children George Purvis, Henry George and John Moffitt Black. Less than a month after arrival John Black was offered the position of Manager of the Castle Hill Farm. He had ten children with the first wife and four children with the second.

The Walker side lived at Terania Creek area and Alstonville. His parents married in Lismore and I have found their wedding report. I have gone back to about 1610 in England and I was able to tell him that one of his Walker forebears became Dame Sarah as her husband was Sir Nathaniel Creswick KCB, Solicitor and an English footballer who co-founded Sheffield Football Club, the oldest football club in the world in 1857. With William Prest, he established the Sheffield Rules, which were highly influential upon the modern laws of association football.

I have a wee bit more to find for him and it has been a real pleasure, I am using Word and putting it together as a Walker folder and a Black folder including newspaper stories, BDM records, any photos and information that I find. If you want to attempt your own story and if you have any questions please ask.

Alison Draper, Researcher

Australia first post offices



Standing in Wollongbar post office the other day, awaiting my turn, I was looking around at all the wide and various things it offered. It got me thinking about the history of Australian post offices.

We use post offices for so many different things now - paying bills, banking, plus newspapers, stationery and even confectionery just to touch the surface. But back when the First Fleet arrived in 1788 with Marines, free settlers and convicts there would be no mail or contact with England until the next fleet arrived. The feeling of isolation must have been huge, especially when supplies started to run out and famine was just around the corner.

When the Second Fleet arrived two years later in 1790, it went down in history, as the 'Death Fleet' because of the appalling conditions the convicts were subject to on the voyage, which resulted in hundreds of deaths.

By this time the colony was desperate for supplies and news from home.

One of the 11 ships in the Second Fleet was the *Lady Juliana*, which arrived in late June, bringing 226 female convicts. She also carried a precious cargo - letters from home.

There were riots to get at the letters, and according to marine officer Watkin Tench, "Letters, letters!" was the cry. They were produced, and torn open in trembling agitation. News burst upon us like meridian splendour on a blind man'.

The arrival and distribution of mail in the early years of the colony was chaotic.

As the population grew so did the volume of mail to and from England. The result was that ships arriving in Sydney Cove were inundated with people looking for mail.

Complaints to the Lieutenant-Governor of fraud, theft and extortion at the docks led the New South Wales Corps to appoint an official Postmaster.

This was 21 year old Isaac Nichols, who arrived in October 1791, having been sentenced to seven years

transportation for stealing. Nichols was hardworking and didn't drink.

His honesty and diligence impressed Governor Hunter, who also appointed Nichols as the Chief Overseer of convict gangs in Sydney.

By 1797 Nichols had completed his sentence and Governor Hunter granted him 50 acres (20 hectares) of land in the Concord district and over the next 10 years he increased his holdings there to 1400 acres. In this time he also opened an inn established a shipyard and built a 33-ton trading schooner, the *Governor Hunter*.

By 1806 Nichols had become one of the wealthiest businessmen in the colony, and three years later his home became the first recognised post office in Australia.

In June 1809 he boarded the brig *Experiment* and collected the first official bag of mail from Britain, therefore avoiding the previous riots and mayhem. This is now known as the birth of the postal system in Australia.

The earliest recorded evidence of mail delivery appears in 10 July 1803, when an announcement appeared in the *Sydney Gazette* authorising boatmen travelling between Sydney and Parramatta to charge for the delivery of 'Letters, exclusive of Government Service, at two pence each'. The recipient of the letter was then obliged to pay for its delivery.

But sending a letter overseas was a mixture of luck and resolve. The sender would need to wait for a departing ship, give the letter to the ship's captain with no guarantees that it would be delivered.



The first Sydney post office. State Library NSW, FL1231544

Nichols created the first postmark 'Sydney NSW' around 1812. These postmarks were undated but were the forerunner of the stamp in Australia.

After collecting the incoming mail, Nichols published a list of the people who had received mail in the *Sydney Gazette*, set the prices for collecting it and kept the revenue as remuneration.

As settlements and towns were established throughout the Australian colonies the need for post offices grew.

Foreman Crawford in his book, *Duck Creek*



John Perry MLA

Mountain now Alstonville, tells of John Perry who arrived in the Duck Creek Mountain area from Sydney in 1872 and set up a store close to the Ocean View Hotel offering postal services. He became the unofficial Postmaster and residents had their mail directed c/o Perry's Store.

In 1873 he became the official Postmaster and changed the name of the post office to Alstonville as a tribute to his wife who was a Miss Alston. So that was how Alstonville got its name.

A few years later a government post office building was built on the corner of Bruxner Highway and Teven Road and Michael McDonald was appointed Postmaster. Two years later it became a telegraph office and he received a salary of seventy-five pounds a year. Two more moves followed until it reached its present site.



Alstonville's second Post Office around 1902

Back in 1876 mail for the Wollongbar families who lived and farmed in the area, was delivered by the Ballina to Lismore mailman who left it in an open box attached to a tree on the roadway near 'Wollongbar' the home of William Henry Smith. The residents complained to the Postmaster-General and

after much arguing William Smith was appointed the first postmaster in July of that year.

There were requests to move the post office to the Spring Hill Creamery and the Government Experimental Farm, but both were refused.

The next official Postmaster of the Wollongbar post office in 1899 was John Seccombe who began duty on his property at Spring Hill. He wrote to the Postmaster-General asking that the post office be upgraded to include a postal note and a telephone exchange.

When he retired his daughter, Nellie Myrtle, aged 26 was appointed Postmistress in 1914.

The corner of Lindendale Road and the Bruxner Highway was the next home of the Wollongbar post office in 1912. Tom and May Thresher operated a general store and the post office until the 1950s when Kevin and Doreen Dufficy took over.



An early Wollongbar Post Office

When the Palm Shopping Centre was developed by Terry Collins, the Commonwealth wanted the post office agency moved from the BP store to a post office offering a full service. This was accomplished when Trevor Robson added the post office service to his fruit and vegetable shop at the Palm Shopping Centre until 1997.

Another change took place when Steve and Fay Evans took over from Trevor Robson. The greengrocery part of the shop was closed the following year and the Evans' took over the post office and newsagency.

The present Postmistress is Sharon Dransfield who took over in 2013 and has upgraded the post office to include an amazing choice of gifts, a Lotto section, plus all the things you can find in a newsagency.



Sharon Dransfield

Rosemary Weaver