

# *Footsteps*



**Port Macquarie & Districts  
Family History Society Inc.**

## SOCIETY ORGANISATION AND CONTACTS

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### AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY ~ 2019–2020

Acquisitions/Archives.....Clive Smith  
Find a Grave.....Carol Smallman  
Footsteps Magazine.....Margaret Blight  
General Meetings Roster.....Dawn Stephens  
InfoEmail..... Diane Gillespie/Jennifer Mullin  
Journals.....Alastair Moss/Greg Hearne  
Library Assistant.....Pauline Hincksman  
Library Roster.....Sue Brindley  
Membership/Minutes.....Jennifer Mullin  
Museum Heritage Group.....Diane Gillespie  
NSW & ACT Association – Delegate.....Clive Smith  
Public Officer..... Clive Smith  
Publicity/Facebook.....Bev Mulcahy  
Research Co-Ordinator .....Trysha Hanly  
Ryerson Index Transcribers.....Kay and Terry Browne  
Social Coordinator.....Margaret Blight  
Website .....Sue Brindley  
Welfare.....Yvonne Toomey

### SUPPORT GROUPS

Convict Studies Group.....Clive Smith  
DNA Support Group.....Ken Hunt/Pauline Every  
Family Search.....Robyn Denley/Pauline Every  
Research Support Group.....Clive Smith/Rex Toomey  
Writers' Group.....Diane Gillespie

### CURRENT PROJECT COORDINATOR

Port Macquarie Rate Books.....Rex Toomey

*Life Members: Terry Browne, Kay Browne, Frank Maskill*

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*Cover Photo: Christmas Day at Studley Park, Victoria 1917/1923 from **Illustrated Melbourne** Post courtesy of State Library of Victoria - [www.slv.gov.au](http://www.slv.gov.au)*

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### **HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR MEMBERS**

We wish you a happy Christmas season and hope you enjoy many pleasant and relaxing days with family and friends during the holidays.

We trust that your Christmas Day will be celebrated in a more comfortable manner than that of the group pictured on the cover, and that 2021 will be a much happier and more productive year for us all.

### **NEW MEMBER**

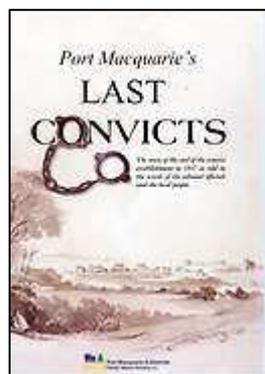
A warm welcome is extended to new member, Terri **Topp** from Moonan Flat. We hope you will enjoy your association with our Society and that you will benefit from the resources and workshops available.



## PRESIDENT'S TWO CENTS WORTH

*Diane Gillespie*

2020 has certainly been a year like no other. Not only have we, as a community, endured the worst that Australia's climate has had to offer but the world has been impacted by a pandemic that is highly infectious with possible dire consequences. In Port Macquarie we seem to have escaped the worst of the restrictions, adapting to the new way of life, and becoming more aware of the restrictions imposed by health authorities.



On behalf of Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society I would like to congratulate our Treasurer, Clive **Smith**, on winning the prestigious **Mander Jones** award for the Society's latest publication – 'Port Macquarie's Last Convicts'. This book is the culmination of many hours of research, checking and cross-checking various sources to derive as much accuracy from Colonial records as possible. It covers the final years of the Convict Settlement here in Port Macquarie and how it was 'wound up' to transform into a sleepy fishing village in the late 1840s. To be recognised by one's peers is indeed high acclamation. Well done Clive!

During the past few months members of our Society have continued their pursuit of Family History within Covid restrictions. Our General Meetings have been held with some members attending CC Mac **Adams** Centre while the majority of our members joined the meetings via Zoom.

Our speakers for the past couple of months have been Rex **Toomey** and Noeline **Kyle**. Rex used his philatelic knowledge to acknowledge the 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary of James **Cook**'s exploration of the East Coast of Terra Australis, displaying commemorative stamps that aligned with **Cook**'s journey to observe the transit of Venus in the Southern Hemisphere and exploration of the Southern Ocean.

Noeline **Kyle**'s presentation highlighted her latest avenue of research. Noeline's passion is identifying the women in Colonial Australia by name. She has published a book naming the midwives who worked in NSW and now has turned her attention to women working in gaols in NSW during the nineteenth century. The depth of research that is required to elicit the names of these hidden personages from our Colonial history was evident from Noeline's presentation. We are incredibly pleased to have these members share their knowledge with us and sincerely thank them for accepting the challenge of not only presenting to our members but using the new medium of Zoom.

This month we look forward to hearing from Tamsin **O'Connor** whose topic will cover the organisation of the female convicts at the Penal settlement in Moreton Bay.

Our Support Groups have been meeting via Zoom and thanks to Brian **Panisset** we have also had some sessions on the use of Zoom for interested members.

We were fortunate to gather in person a couple of weeks ago for a Spring picnic on the banks of the Hastings River. It was wonderful to see familiar faces and meet some new members.

Access to our resources within the Port Macquarie Library has been limited during this year due to restrictions on gatherings. Members have been using the internet to access Ancestry and FindMyPast from home.

As we approach the end of a turbulent year, I would like to wish everyone a joyous and relaxed Christmas Season. Thank you all for your support in 2020. On behalf of our Committee, I wish you a wonderful Christmas and look forward to your continued support in 2021.

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## FROM THE EDITOR

*Margaret Blight*

Our theme for this edition of Footsteps was 'Good Times - Bad Times'. This year has certainly had more 'ups' and 'downs' than many of us have faced in our lifetime, but we can be thankful that the restrictions imposed in Australia have successfully stemmed the catastrophic loss of life that we have witnessed in other parts of the world. In ordinary circumstances, though, we see individuals and families experiencing good times and not so good times and these have varying impacts and outcomes for both individuals and others. The stories herein describe some of these experiences.

Also included are some articles about our local area which next year will celebrate the 200-year anniversary of European settlement. To coincide with the anniversary year, the Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society will be hosting the NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Annual Conference on 11 September 2021. Conference planning is underway, and we look forward to a different and innovative format to comply with any social distancing requirements that may be in force in September next year.

In this edition, you will also notice that there is no 'Computer Corner'. Rex Toomey has written 60 articles which have been included in Footsteps every three months for the past 15 years. He has provided especially useful information over the years, so periodically some of his articles will be repeated. A big "thank you" to Rex for his enduring commitment throughout all these years.

Over the Christmas break, perhaps you can give some thought to your ancestors and pen a story about 'An Ancestor You Admire and Why'. This is the theme for the February edition of Footsteps, and I would like articles by 24 January 2021 if possible, please.

Lastly, thank you to everyone who has submitted stories during the past year – we would certainly not be able to publish a Journal every three months without your support and contributions.

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## THEORETICALLY WHAT HAPPENED IN THE PAST ALSO HAPPENS IN THE PRESENT

*Margaret Yates*

The following is an extract from "Family Tree" issue March 2020, by Dr Kim Fleet who worked with Aboriginal people in Australia for five years, researching their genealogies and social history before turning her hand to researching her own roots in Orkney and Liverpool.

### ***“Getting perspective on life ...***

*“It can be shocking to learn that our ancestors led lives of hardship or deprivation. However, it can encourage us to reflect on our own problems and realise that, not only are our problems possibly not as severe as our ancestors’, but that they found a way to solve their problems, and so can we. One of my ancestors emigrated from Prussia to Britain, and for the first few censuses he was living in poor areas and doing a range of manual, hard jobs. However, later in life he opened his own drapery shop and, when he died, he left a substantial sum in his Will. I dug up his story during the recession, and understanding that my ancestor had not only overcome financial hardship, but had managed to thrive, enabled me to re-evaluate my own worries as part of the normal highs and lows of life.*

*“Exploring our family history within the context of social and historical processes encourages us to see our own lives as part of wider historical events. Our ancestors were affected by the agricultural revolution, industrialisation, and migration. Like them, we too are affected by developing technology, new ways of working, new opportunities and changing social norms. They learned to adapt, and so will we.”*

On reading this article, it demonstrated to me that there is hope for the world’s humanity as we all adapt to the challenges of the current pandemic that has followed so closely on from our drought, fires and floods. Changes in social distancing, washing our hands more thoroughly, and for more reasons than previously thought of, thinking of others and not just ourselves, gives us more understanding of how others are living and of the difficulties they are coping with on a daily basis. Some of us are ‘lucky’ others ‘not so’, but if one is happy and can smile in adversity, there is always hope, help, and health.

It will be interesting to see what changes come from this period, and I wonder what future generations will think of us when they study the history and activities related to Covid-19. What would you write to give an insight into what you did, saw, heard, and thought of regarding the various events of this current time? What stories would you leave for your descendants to read in fifty, seventy, or ninety years’ time – stories about changes in your lifetime ... major ... minor ... comical ... other ... recorded and left with your legal papers in a sealed envelope, addressed to **‘My Future Family Historian’?**

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## **THE COVID 19 PERIL**

*Amanda Short*

Covid-19 reared its ugly head in Australia in March 2020. My cousin Ian **Crawford** and his wife Cheryl travel regularly overseas and were due to go on yet another holiday, this time a 31-day cruise exploring Latin America. After doing all the checks in Australia to make sure it was still safe to travel, they headed off on 4 March.

They set sail on 7 March from Buenos Aires, Argentina, along with 1,241 other passengers, 131 being Aussies, on the ship *Zaandam*. In La Boca, Buenos Aires they were treated to a tango exhibition. Their first stop was the spectacular Iguazu Falls, a series of 275 waterfalls, which together make up the largest waterfall in the world. They took a fantastic jet-boat ride

where they went up close, then under the falls - getting totally wet through. After a couple of days at sea they jumped in a 4WD for a two hour cross-country drive to Volunteer Point where they experienced a great day being up close and personal talking with the King, Magellanic and Gentoo penguins in the Falklands – such beautiful animals and a privilege to witness so close.

The day after the ship had set sail, the U.S. State Department warned Americans to stay away from cruises. Crew diligently wiped down the handrails, tables, and elevator buttons. Perspex screens appeared around the buffets and all meals were served. By 13 March President Trump had declared a national emergency and Holland America Line announced it would pause all cruising for a month.

Despite the news, life aboard the *Zaandam* remained unchanged. They sailed through the Straits of Magellan and arrived in Punta Arenas in Chile on 14 March. At dawn they were treated to a beautiful sunrise. Ashore they took an Uber taxi with a friendly English-speaking Brazilian. They were with him for six hours, initially walking around town where he told them of its history and pointed out places of interest. Then he drove them for an hour to Fort Bulnes and a museum, in time for an English tour, then back to town to visit the cemetery and other areas. After a full day they were blessed to see a full rainbow over Punta Arenas as they sailed away.

It was after they filed back aboard the ship that their trip essentially ended – little did they know that it would be the last time that anyone aboard set foot on land for weeks. A couple of hours after the ship left port, the Captain made a troubling announcement that the cruise would not be stopping in Ushuaia, Argentina, their next destined port of call. Instead, they doubled back to Punta Arenas with the promise that passengers could disembark and fly home if they got there in time. Frantic emails flew home to their travel agent to re-arrange flights, together with emails to family to follow up to make sure they were received. But when they arrived the Chilean government had closed its borders, and no-one was allowed off the ship. At this stage there was no-one sick on board “*so it is the healthiest place to be*” they thought.

After being anchored offshore for two days while the Captain tried desperately to find a port to accept them, they started heading north. Ian and Cheryl looked on the bright side and said daylight cruising meant they would see the glaciers and fjords. Chile did however allow the ship to refuel and stock up on three weeks’ worth of supplies when anchored off historic Valparaiso.

The trouble with not knowing where you are going to land, means that you cannot make any alternate arrangements with flights to get home. They would get information from the Captain one day and the next it would be different. At some stages the information given changed from hour to hour. The Captain was having to negotiate with many people and with so much red tape to secure an ideal outcome for his passengers.

One night he made an announcement that as a reward for the passengers’ patience, complimentary wine would be served in all dining areas and it would NOT be CHILEAN? Everyone thought he had gone off Chile in a big way....

On 21 March passengers saw for the first time that crew members were wearing masks while they sanitised a room. The following day passengers were told that they were to be confined to their rooms – 42 people, including 29 crew had reported flu-like symptoms. They got three meals a day – crew knocked on the door and left the food outside. By 24 March, the figures had increased to 77 people, including 47 crew members.



*Ian keeping fit walking in his cabin on the Zaandam  
Photo: I. Crawford 2020*

Being an active person Ian was trying to maintain his 5-6 kms walking every day. He must have worn the carpet out in the few metres he had! They were wiping all hard surfaces with wipes, spraying ‘Glen 20’ on handles and the air conditioning unit to help protect themselves. They went that extra mile by cutting up ‘Chux’, sewing them together and spraying with Glen 20 as an extra filter around the air-conditioning duct. By day

five, they were fed up with being cooped up inside and the crew started a fresh air program. They were finally allowed out on deck for 30 minutes on 26 March.



*Above: ‘Chux’ around the air-conditioning unit in the Crawford’s cabin’ Below: Finally, fresh air out on the deck of the Zaandam  
Photos: I. Crawford 2020*



On 27 March, the cruise line announcement hit the news that aboard the *Zaandam* **four people had died**, two others tested positive for Covid-19, and another 138 were sick. On its voyage north the *Zaandam* tried to dock at every country along the way, only to be rejected – Peru, Ecuador, and Colombia.

News of what had happened to the Covid-19 outbreak in Sydney from passengers from the *Ruby Princess* had preceded them, and no-one wanted a repeat of this. Holland America organised for a sister ship the *Rotterdam* to meet up with the *Zaandam* off the coast of Panama to provide supplies, much-needed Covid-19 test kits and staff, and they were to sail together to America.

It was decided to transfer people who were over 70 years and were healthy (i.e. those who passed a temperature check) from the “unclean” ship to the *Rotterdam*. Ian and Cheryl were lucky to meet these criteria. They were genuinely concerned with what was happening on their ship but remained calm (at least on the outside) and took comfort from all the prayers coming from family and friends back home. At 7pm they were still waiting to be transferred and thought that it would probably happen the next morning. Their bags had been packed all day ready and waiting to be sanitised before the transfer. Masks were issued and they had been instructed not to touch anything during the transfer and that they would go straight back into isolation on the *Rotterdam*. By 9pm Cheryl took off her shoes and lay on the bed and was

thinking about getting ready to go to sleep, when the knock came on their door from a Hazmat-suited crew member telling them to hurry because they were ready to transfer them.

It was a major operation, taking one cabin at a time to the Tender, (only one person allowed in the elevator at a time where they were not allowed to touch anything) then only a few people on the Tender over to the *Rotterdam* where they arrived at about 10.15pm. They were very pleased and excited as they had been upgraded to a balcony room meaning they had access to FRESH AIR.

Holland America were scrambling to secure a passage through the Panama Canal which had strict rules blocking infected ships from crossing. Still lacking docking approval at Fort Lauderdale in Florida, the two ships eventually got permission to go through the Canal on 29 March. Ian and Cheryl had strict orders to keep all the blinds closed and they were not allowed to do any laundry. They watched their progress on the ship's tracker seeing it circle the bay a few times before entering the canal in the dead of night with the lights off - both ships slipped through the canal without any trouble.

The plight of the two-ship convoy now became a rescue mercy mission and President Trump advised his friend the Governor of Florida, Ron DeSantis, to allow them to dock for humanitarian reasons. Prior to this DeSantis had previously been very reluctant to let them dock. Ian and Cheryl received their disembarkation notice on 2 April. Flights had been organised by the cruise line to get them home. So, with the roads blocked and a 30-motorcycle police escort, together with the military carrying machine guns they had a 4-hour bus ride (which would normally take 20 minutes) straight to the tarmac at Fort Lauderdale airport. At San Francisco they were to get a connecting flight to Sydney - ½ hour before the flight was due to leave, it was cancelled, as the flight crew refused to take passengers from a cruise ship.

The cruise line then had to find accommodation for 130 people at 11pm at night and organise alternate flights for them the following day. At 3am a hotel that had been closed for four months was found that was willing to take them. They were told to be ready later that day for a flight to Sydney scheduled the same time as the original one. Unfortunately, it too was cancelled because they were waiting for another 80 people from the *Coral Princess* to also join the flight – and they were running late. The Consulate had to address the passengers – there were quite a few abusive and tense people amongst them, and they were not practising social distancing due to being cramped in a small foyer.

There were no masks available in San Francisco, so the cruise line had them made. They also provided gloves. Both items had to be left on the entire flight. It was not until they got to the airport that they found out they were travelling to Melbourne and not Sydney. All crew for the charter flight were volunteers and told the cruise line that they would not be feeding the passengers on the flight, so the cruise line organised packages of food for everyone prior to boarding the plane.

Once in Melbourne they were taken to a hotel for 14 days' compulsory isolation. The windows and doors were locked, the walls were grey and the carpet dark blue – it was depressing! This isolation proved to be the hardest of all. It was like they had come to a full stop and they were not going anywhere. At least on the ship they had been moving forward, even though they did

not know where they would end up. They both tested positive to Covid-19. They asked questions and got inconsistent answers. The food was not good, and they did not cater for a gluten free diet. They were provided with three teabags and four coffee sachets and when they asked for more, they were told “*we are not running a hotel – you can buy them at Woolworths and have them delivered*”.

Still not cleared of Covid-19 they were advised they could fly to Sydney on day 12 of their isolation. Just to be sure Cheryl asked the question to make certain they would be allowed to fly even though they had not tested negative yet. Astonishingly the answer was still ‘yes’. They stood at the hotel door in the foyer waiting to be let out. When asked what they were doing, they said they were waiting for someone to open the door for them. In exasperation someone came over to press the button to let them out. They laugh about it now, but at the time they had been conditioned NOT to touch buttons.

They arrived back home on 21 April, one day short of seven weeks and in that time only had 10 days doing what they paid for. They then self-isolated at home and subsequently had three negative results. Fortunately, they have been well since.

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## NOT MANY GOOD TIMES, BUT LOTS OF BAD

*Lyndall Nairn*

Many of the British convicts who were transported to Australia between 1788 and 1869 managed to turn over a new leaf, so after serving their time, they led productive lives with no further brushes with the law. However, some convicts fell back into their old habits and re-offended, so instead of putting their convictions behind them, they continued in the penal system in Australia. One such convict, who tried to be a successful emancipist but did not make it, was John Lloyd **Smith**. In fact, if he had not received a conditional pardon in 1865 and been put aboard a ship bound for San Francisco, the sixty-year-old John Lloyd **Smith** would probably not have survived much longer as an “old lag” in the New South Wales penal system<sup>1</sup>.

From our twenty-first century perspective, it is difficult to understand the reasons behind John Lloyd **Smith**’s string of convictions that spanned four decades from 1829 to the 1860s. Nevertheless, the facts of John’s life story are as follows.

John Lloyd **Smith**, my great, great, great grandfather, was born c.1805 in Alnwick, Northumberland, England<sup>2</sup>. When he was about fifteen, he moved to Edinburgh, where he worked as a butcher. His business failed in 1824, so he moved again to Liverpool, where he got married. Then he paid his debts in Edinburgh, and he and his wife moved to the Isle of Man, where he ran a public house. That business did not succeed, so he moved to London, where he became a shop assistant with a linen draper, who also went out of business. John returned to Edinburgh early in 1829 and lived with his sister Jane and her husband James **Lowrie** for a short time. James **Lowrie**, a witness at John’s trial in Edinburgh on 8 January, 1830, commented that John “*seemed to have no funds ... and did not appear anxious to get into employment*”, so **Lowrie** gave his brother-in-law some money and asked him to leave his house<sup>3</sup>. In this trial, the facts of October and November 1829 are clear: John hired a horse to ride from Edinburgh to Glasgow, but instead of returning the horse at the due time, he tried to

sell it. He went to a tailor to order some new clothes, which he collected but did not pay for; instead, he tried to sell them<sup>4</sup>. John claimed that he was engaging in these fraudulent activities “*out of necessity*” because he needed money to pay his overdue rent; he also admitted to being drunk and to seeking employment with the East India Company<sup>5</sup>. At the same time, John told several of the twenty-two witnesses who gave evidence against him that he was in Edinburgh doing business for his employer in London (who he later explained was no longer in business), and he used a series of aliases (**Lloyd, Shepherd, Scott**) to cover his lies. The Judge of the High Court of the Justiciary found John guilty of horse stealing, falsehood, fraud and wilful imposition and sentenced him to transportation for seven years<sup>6</sup>.

John then spent several months in 1830 on the prison hulk *Ganymede* at Woolwich<sup>7</sup> before boarding the *York*, which departed England in September 1830 and arrived in Sydney on 7 February, 1831<sup>8</sup>. On board the *York*, John became friends with another convict, Thomas Armitage **Salmon**, from Leeds<sup>9</sup>. John’s indent on arrival in Sydney indicates that he could read and write and that he was a widower with one daughter<sup>10</sup>. He was assigned to work first for William **Merritt** and then for Seth **Hawker**<sup>11</sup>, so his life in Sydney did not involve imprisonment.

In 1834, John met Mary Ann **Salmon**, the sister of Thomas Armitage **Salmon**. Mary Ann had travelled to Australia as an unassisted immigrant with Sarah **Jennings**, Thomas’s wife, and their four children on the *Princess Victoria*, which arrived in Sydney on 4 February 1834<sup>12</sup>. John and Mary Ann’s application to marry was approved in February 1835, and they were married in April<sup>13</sup>. Then between 1835 and 1841, John and Mary Ann had five children.

After they earned their Certificates of Freedom in 1837<sup>14</sup>, John and Thomas set up a butcher business together<sup>15</sup> with shops in Pitt Street<sup>16</sup> and George Street<sup>17</sup>, and they paid eight hundred pounds to buy land with a slaughterhouse at Black Wattle Swamp, which today is the Sydney suburb of Glebe<sup>18</sup>. This business seems to have been successful for several years<sup>19</sup>, but during the economic depression in 1843, they went bankrupt<sup>20</sup>. With many creditors pressing<sup>21</sup>, John decided to leave Sydney. On his way to Melbourne, he stopped in a pub in Yass, where he must have been desperate for money because he was convicted at the Superior Court in Melbourne of forging and uttering two cheques with a combined value of about thirty pounds<sup>22</sup>.

This second conviction in April 1843 involved harsher punishments than the first one because now John was sentenced to life imprisonment<sup>23</sup>. He spent the following months in the Hyde Park Barracks, Darlinghurst Gaol and Cockatoo Island, before being shipped to Norfolk Island in February, 1844<sup>24</sup>. John’s wife Mary Ann lodged two petitions on his behalf, one in October 1843 asking for leniency, which resulted in John’s life sentence being commuted to seven years, and another one in August, 1845, requesting that John be removed from Norfolk Island to Hobart<sup>25</sup>. He was transferred to Port Arthur in Van Diemen’s Land in June 1846 per the *Lady Franklin*<sup>26</sup>. Conditions in these gaols in the 1840s were extremely harsh, so John must have emerged as an altered man. He earned his Certificate of Freedom in August 1850 and then travelled on the *Margaret and Agnes* from Launceston to Port Phillip<sup>27</sup>.

In the 1850s, John continued with the same pattern of non-violent criminal behaviour, now using the alias, John Robert **Smith**. In February 1853, he passed two false cheques in Sydney and was sentenced to three years hard labour on the roads<sup>28</sup>. In October 1854, he was convicted

of horse stealing at the Maitland Quarter Sessions and sentenced to five years on the roads<sup>29</sup>. In November 1857, he was again convicted at the Sydney Quarter Sessions of having passed forged cheques in Liverpool, and he was sentenced to six months' hard labour in Parramatta Gaol<sup>30</sup>.

The oral history in our family indicates that his wife and children were conscious of the shame John had brought on them, but it is not clear whether he was living with them or not. During these years, he gained two Tickets of Leave, one in Goulburn in June 1857 and another in Scone in February 1859<sup>31</sup>. John's son Robert was working as an articled clerk with the solicitor William **Roberts** in Goulburn in the late 1850s<sup>32</sup>, and in 1859 his other son, Henry, got married in Cassilis, not far from Scone<sup>33</sup>, so perhaps John was living with his family during some of these years.

John obviously had difficulty staying on the right side of the law because he was convicted yet again in July 1860 at the Wollongong Quarter Sessions for forging and uttering false cheques on two occasions in Wollongong and Jamberoo. He was sentenced to a total of seven years hard labour on public works<sup>34</sup>. Records from Cockatoo Island indicate that he was serving this sentence there during 1863-64<sup>35</sup>. Then in July 1865, a miracle happened: John was granted a pardon on the condition that he leave the Australian colonies and never return. In August 1865, the Water Police transferred him by steamer from Cockatoo Island to Newcastle, where he was put on board the *Atrevida*, a coal freighter, bound for San Francisco<sup>36</sup>. The details concerning the reason for this conditional pardon are scanty, but it seems as if Frederick **Kostin**, one of the victims involved with John's last fraud conviction, petitioned Governor **Young** and suggested that the NSW Government would benefit if John Lloyd **Smith** were to be exiled.

Because **Kostin** had been one of John's a long-term friends and associates, he even offered to pay for John's passage to another country<sup>37</sup>. Perhaps John's solicitor son Robert was pulling the strings behind the scenes to arrange for his father's conditional pardon in 1865. Five years later, Robert became a politician<sup>38</sup>; it would have been difficult for him to be elected to parliament if his convict father had been serving his sentence by digging out the sandstone to make the dry dock at Cockatoo Island. Nevertheless, some mystery still surrounds John Lloyd **Smith**, who at roughly sixty years of age, left Australia for California, where he seems to disappear from the historical record. It is possible that he adopted a new identity with yet another alias.

From the distance of more than 150 years, it is difficult to know how to interpret John Lloyd **Smith**'s character. Why did he not learn his lesson after his first offence and stick to the straight and narrow, like his brother-in-law Thomas Armitage **Salmon**, who did not commit any further crimes after being transported to Australia? Was John simply a con man who was beyond rehabilitation? Did he become so inured to and institutionalized in the convict system that he lacked the motivation and skills to survive in the outside world? Certainly, the harsh conditions in the prisons at Norfolk Island and Port Arthur in the 1840s broke and damaged many men for the rest of their lives.

Was he a victim who felt defeated by unfortunate circumstances? After three business failures in Britain, he then experienced a fourth disastrous bankruptcy in Sydney, and with the pressure of having to repay large debts and at the same time support a family, it is not surprising that

he went off the rails. John's testimony from his 1830 trial in Edinburgh suggests that he may have been experiencing some mental health problems, such as depression or a drinking problem<sup>39</sup>. Perhaps there is some truth in all of these speculations about his character; after all, the reasons behind his disastrous series of decisions must have been complex. However, the upshot of John Lloyd **Smith's** life is that he experienced lots of bad times and very few good times.

1. Ancestry.com. John Lloyd Smith, conditional pardon, 28 & 29 July, 1865. *New South Wales, Australia, Convict Registers of Conditional and Absolute Pardons, 1788-1870*.
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## "TAKE ME HOME, ALF"

Trysha Hanly

### ‘Good Times – Bad Times’ - the story of our first day in Australia – a great day for my brother and me, but not so for Mum!

In December 1952, my parents made a significant decision to migrate to Australia as “Ten Pound Poms”. They had been through the dark times, dense living, dark skies, war rubble and rationing, and the last straw was the London fog that month which killed 12,000 people.

For Mum and Dad, this was a very emotional decision. They were leaving their siblings and familiarity behind. For my brother and me, it was an exciting adventure, and we will forever be grateful to our parents for their choice.

After a six-week voyage from England, we arrived at the docks in Melbourne on a hot and steamy day in February 1953. There was buzz of excitement as all the migrants leaving the boat in Melbourne gathered their bags and boxes together. Mum, Dad, my brother Ken and I went down the long gangplank and were at last on Australian soil. An assistant helped my parents to complete the customs formalities and gave us directions to the station so that we could catch a train to our sponsor's home. "*See you later*", said the assistant as he left us.

Dad, who is not known for his patience and tolerance, grew more and more uneasy as we waited in the customs building. He finally went to the desk to ask when the assistant would be back to see us. That was when we found out that "*see you later*" was a casual way of saying ‘goodbye’ in Australia. Oh dear, we had a bit to learn about the English language as it is spoken in Australia.

After a reassuring cup of tea for Mum and Dad and an ice cream for Ken and me, we went to Flinders Street Station to catch a train to our new home. The carriages seemed very old, but I recall being amazed by the large number of iridescent green and brown beetles inside the carriages. They were on the floor, on the walls, on the windows, and flying about our heads. I remember wanting to collect the Christmas beetles in a jar, just like in England where my brother and I used to collect tadpoles and fish we called ‘tiddlers’ and take them home in jam jars.

However, this was definitely not England, and one glance at Mum was enough to know that all was not well. Mum had had enough! What with the heat, the waiting, the unfamiliar language, and now, to top it off - a plague of bizarre beetles - she was almost hysterical. "*Take us back to the ship, right now, Alf. I want to go home*".

"*Take me home, Alf*" was a phrase we were to hear often from Mum in our first couple of years in Australia.

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### A Good Time! ...or a Bad Time?

On the passage of the brig *Lady Nelson* from Sydney to Port Macquarie in May 1823, the mate Thomas **Read**, leaped overboard, in a state of delirium ... and was drowned!

Source: *Sydney Gazette*, 29 May 1823, p.2 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article2181897>

## GOOD TIMES ... MY MOTHER LOVED TO SEW

*Beryl Walters*

I recently gifted some of my mother's sewing items to the Parkes Museum to add to their Objects Collection and I was prompted to write the following story to accompany them.

My mother was Belle (Isabel) **McKeowen** and she loved to cook and garden, but most of all she loved to sew. She didn't make Bridal gowns or Ball frocks or such grand clothes, but she did make many items for family and clients over many years, and to think that she learned to sew in a little country town called Bogan Gate during the years 1940 to 1945 with lessons from a visiting teacher from Parkes! I guess that was an early initiative of the Department of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) and I believe it continued up until a few years ago.

Mum and Dad, Belle and Jack (Stanley John) **McKeowen**, were married in Parkes in 1931 whilst residing in Bogan Gate, and over the next fourteen years they ran a Café and General Store there, servicing the local population and visiting Ministers of Religion, 'travellers' and farm workers. During this time, they had three children, two girls and a boy, so the offer of sewing lessons was a dream come true and Belle loved them. The lady teacher taught Pattern Drafting as well as Cutting and Sewing techniques which enabled students to complete outfits such as blouses, skirts, dresses, slacks and children's clothes. She also taught smocking skills and Mum used her smocking expertise to enhance many garments. I still have three dresses that Mum made for me in quality viyella fabric with beautifully smocked embroidery, which I wore, and later dressed my dolls in ... I wonder whether little girls still play with dolls?



*Buttonhole Scissors – these have a small screw that can be turned to adjust the blade, creating cuts of certain lengths. The notch in the blade allows buttonholes to be made without cutting the edge of the fabric.*

The items I donated to the Museum were a pair of Buttonhole Scissors and a Tracing Wheel both dating from the 1940s, and a brown suede Knitting Needles Bag that dated from the 1930s.



*Tracing Wheel used to transfer pattern markings onto fabric*

I became fully aware of these items when my parents bought a General Store and Carrying business in Trundle in 1945. We lived behind the shop and my bedroom doubled as the 'sewing room' where Mum made alterations to outfits for both men and women, using the treadle sewing machine of course! Here she also measured clients for ready-made suits which were ordered from Sydney - brands such as 'Crusader Cloth' and 'Stamina'. Sundays were especially busy as many farming families came into town for Church and for shopping and often wanted alterations done. Those were the days when everyone dressed up for Church, for the Annual Show, and for the Races and other major events.

Mum also had a very busy haberdashery department staffed by several ladies and whenever she travelled to Sydney on 'buying trips' she would visit stores such as Mark Foys and Anthony Horderns, as well as various warehouses, looking for fabrics, haberdashery and sewing accessories as well as hats, gloves and handbags, etc. I well remember visits with her to the

delightful Tea Rooms in those big Department Stores for delicious morning teas and lunches...I'm sure others with similar experiences also have fond memories of these too.

In addition, Mum dealt regularly with the 'travellers' who were always men, and who circulated around country towns taking orders for various companies and bringing news and sharing 'gossip'. There was always great excitement when the ordered goods arrived and they were unpacked. Mum was always so confident about making outfits and undertaking alterations because of the thorough teaching she received in the 1940s while living at Bogan Gate.

In 1950, Jack and Belle sold their business and moved to Towradgi, a suburb of Wollongong. Mum continued to sew, making Ballet, Tap and Toe outfits and play clothes for me, and dresses with three-tiered, stiffened petticoats for my sister. Later she made street and play clothes for the grandchildren, as well as continuing to do all kinds of alterations. I can still hear the buzz of the sewing machine!!

After her early widowhood, she even did alterations for her male boarders, as well as cooking sumptuous meals for them using her own home-grown garden vegetables and preserved stone fruits. She sewed right up until her death in 1984 and still had some fabrics set aside for her next projects! She also loved to knit and completed many sweaters for family members over the years using her favourite 'Bluebell Crepe' and of course the knitting was always accompanied by the brown suede 'Knitting Bag' which faithfully carried her knitting needles for over 50 years.

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## LADY DAY

*Jennifer Mullin*

For the second consecutive summer I found myself delving into the films on FamilySearch for Ballaugh, Isle of Man. We celebrate Christmas with my paternal **Caley** family whose lineage is **Manx**. The sense of family and belonging must be stronger within our souls than we realise.

I was particularly interested in the 1700s this summer. I came across one record where March 21 was the baptism date for Anne – daughter of Patrick **Caley** and it was the last entry for 1726. Not understanding the protocol for recording this, I asked a friend. The answer was: *“before the Gregorian calendar began ‘Lady Day’ was the beginning of the year”*.

As I researched the subject of Lady Day, I found it fascinating, but it involves more research than I can present here. Basically, Lady Day was 25 March of each year - according to the Julian calendar. It was New Year's Day - or the first of the four traditional English Quarter Days and operated from the year 1155 AD until 1752 AD in England.

The origin of the name is that it is the day that commemorated the tradition of Archangel Gabriel's announcement to Mary that she would give birth to the Christ child. As with many things, the name developed from '(Our) Lady's Day' to 'Lady's Day' then 'Lady Day'. Even though the Julian calendar incorporated leap years it eventually proved inaccurate. They



# Looking Forward – Looking Back

➤ **Looking Forward:** In 2021 we will commemorate 200 years of European settlement in Port Macquarie

➤ **Looking Back:** In 1820 this was happening ...

*Nov 1820.* Captain Francis **Allman** and John **Oxley**, Surveyor General, left Sydney for Port Macquarie on board the schooner *Prince Regent*. **Allman** had been appointed as first Commandant of the proposed penal settlement; **Oxley** wanted to confirm his decision to recommend it for settlement.

They examined the topography, the limit for water transport, the possible observation points to supervise the convict labour force and points to prevent prisoners escaping, sources of fresh water and timber. They also discussed the problems of the bar at the entrance to the harbour.

They returned to Sydney in late December when **Oxley** reported to Governor **Macquarie**:

*“I suggest the proposed establishment at Port Macquarie be made with considerable advantage, near the entrance of the harbour on the south side”.*

During this expedition three accidents happened:

- George **Walker** was drowned in Port Macquarie while mooring the vessel
- Daniel **Brodrick** was drowned about 50 miles north of Port Macquarie while sounding in a boat which was upset by the heavy surf; four others in the boat were rescued
- George **Pawley** had his left hand blown partly away and his arm injured from the accidental discharge of a musket.

## Save the Date

NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies

**Annual Conference**

**Saturday 11 September 2021**

**Port Macquarie**

Email: [pmconference@gmail.com](mailto:pmconference@gmail.com)

<https://www.conference2021@pmdfhs.org.au>

## OUR COMING BICENTENARY

*Richard Grimmond*

The one man most responsible for Port Macquarie being established here today was undoubtedly Governor Lachlan **Macquarie**. He promoted the expedition that led to John **Oxley** discovering Port Macquarie; he gave the order to establish a settlement at Port Macquarie and Port Macquarie is named in his honour.

Initially he was to have been the Deputy Governor but Miles **Nightingale**, the intended Governor was too ill to travel and Lachlan **Macquarie** become the Governor at the last minute.

As the new Governor of New South Wales, **Macquarie** carried out the task with military orderliness. He constructed roads and bridges, laid out towns as well as providing many public buildings. He started a bank and introduced small coins by using the dump from the holes he had punched in Spanish dollars. He standardised weights and measures and fixed prices. He also appointed an ex-convict Francis **Greenway** as the colony's architect, as well as ex-convicts as doctors, magistrates, and jurors. This upset the landed gentry who reported this to the authorities in England. They sent out Commissioner **Bigge** to report on the situation.

John **Bigge** severely criticised **Macquarie**, saying that he was building a nation when he should be running a gaol and inflicting punishment. **Macquarie** was deeply hurt by the criticism and resigned, but before he returned to England, he wanted to visit Port Macquarie.

On 3 November 1821 after a long delay waiting for the right wind to enter, Governor **Macquarie** was eventually rowed ashore to be met at the landing site by Captain **Allman**. On the way in he would have no doubt seen his favourite ship, the *Lady Nelson* washed up on today's Town Beach. He often referred to this ship as a 'grand old lady' because he had done many trips on her to Van Diemen's Land. His large entourage followed and erected two tents outside Captain **Allman**'s house. (This would have been in present day School Street between the Focus Building and Port Macquarie Primary School.)

The **Allman** family graciously offered the Governor one of their bedrooms while his staff prepared and served his lavish meals in the tents. His journal records that he was not feeling well and spent the first day 'at home.' The next day he was shown the agricultural areas on the western side of the port (today's Settlement Point). He was impressed with the good soil and lush growth. He also noted the freshwater stream entering the south side of the port and as he walked along 'the flats at the foot of that fine rising ground' (probably present-day Horton Street). He decided the future site of Port Macquarie, as suggested by John **Oxley**, and wrote in his journal, "*Having thus fixed on the future site of Port Macquarie, I directed Mr Meehan (the Assistant Surveyor General) to lay down the plan of it on paper and submit it to me for my final approval.*"



*Governor Lachlan Macquarie  
Photo from Wikipedia*

That evening, Tuesday 6 November 1821, the Governor's staff had prepared a lavish meal and it is recorded that his whole entourage enjoyed this dinner and drank 'bumpers' (i.e. glasses filled to the brim) to the '*prosperity of the new town*'. (In my opinion 6 November 1821 should be the day celebrated as the official beginning of our town, Port Macquarie.)

On the next day, 7 November Governor **Macquarie** was rowed, at his request, to the western side of Rawdon Island. It is interesting to note that he brought his own boat and boat crew from Sydney with him. When he returned to the landing site, he was greeted with the news that his Master Attendant, Mr **Nicholson**, and Lieutenant **Johnson** had organised the convicts to haul the *Lady Nelson* a further thirty feet (one source says 36 feet) up the beach. This was so the ship would be well out of the water to enable it to be worked on and repaired.

The Governor appreciated the **Allman** family's hospitality and to show his gratitude he named Allman Hill in their honour. No doubt during this visit he would have been told in graphic detail of the disastrous arrival of the first fleet.

Governor **Macquarie** is credited with the establishing five towns namely Castlereagh, Pitt Town, Richmond, Wilberforce, and Windsor. Port Macquarie was to be the sixth town to his credit.

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## FINDING 'MIRIAM' AND THE PEOPLE OF 3 STEWART STREET, PORT MACQUARIE

*Rex Toomey*

In 2018 during a 'Tile Tales' book presentation at U3A, a question was asked about a house named *Miriam* at 3 Stewart Street, Port Macquarie. The house had been formerly owned by Charles **Sexton**, whose name was on one of the tiles. The following is the result of researching the land records and newspapers to learn more about the people who owned the house and that parcel of land.

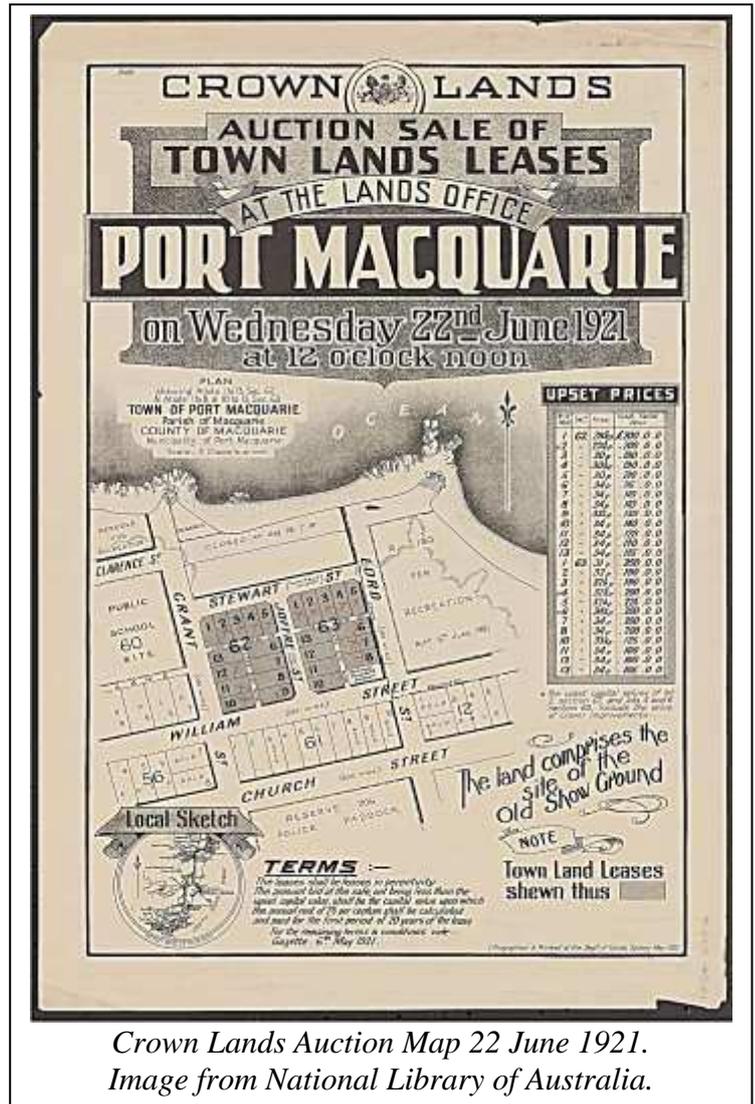
Stewart Street is in one of Port Macquarie's prime locations. It was named after Don **Stewart**, Mayor of Port Macquarie from 1910 to 1915. This street is situated near Gaol Point with commanding views over the Hastings River, Town Beach and the extensive North Shore beach. Commencing from Grant Street, it extends south past Joffre and Lord Streets, downhill, through Lions and Rotary Parks, terminating at William Street. In Port Macquarie's early history, the land adjacent to Stewart Street was the site of the 'new' gaol (erected before 1840) and from February 1885, it was the site of the local showground.

Between 1914 and 1920, both the gaol and showground ceased to exist. The gaol was demolished because it was unused and falling into disrepair. This was coupled with its position on the hill overlooking the town being a stark reminder of the town's convict history. The showground site was dismantled due to lack of support for the annual agricultural shows. These had been held each year for 30 years but after the 1915 show, and with the Great War raging in Europe, the Agricultural Society was unable to gather a quorum to hold an Annual General Meeting and the Agricultural Society quietly disbanded.

In 1919, a public meeting was called by the Mayor at the request of sitting member Henry Douglas **Morton** (local MLA) under the banner ‘Advance Port Macquarie’.

The main purpose was to ‘...open up Port Macquarie as a tourist resort’. One of the recommendations of the meeting was to ‘revoke the showground, and to sell the southern portion thereof in subdivision.’ In 1921, the NSW Government Gazette advertised 26 blocks of this land for sale by an auction which took place in at the local courthouse on 22 June 1921. Only one block was sold for £250 with the other blocks sold off privately over the ensuing months.

The land at number 3 Stewart Street, allotment 4 of section 63, was purchased by Vivienne **Noonan**, a spinster, on 19 July 1921 for £90, considerably less than the offered price. It took another three years before the land was registered in her name on 15 May 1924. Allotments 2 and 3 (representing street numbers 5 and 7) were purchased by other members of the **Noonan** family. Vivienne was a daughter of Edward Patrick **Noonan** (1862-1949), the Irish-born proprietor of the *Macleay Chronicle* newspaper in Kempsey. She held the land for seven years and during that time made no known improvements to the property. Vivienne never married and passed away at Kempsey Hospital in 1978.



Crown Lands Auction Map 22 June 1921. Image from National Library of Australia.

On 3 April 1928, the land was transferred to Elsie Phyllis **Dark**, wife of Eric **Dark** of Dungog, a storekeeper. Elsie was born in Maidenhead, England and married Eric **Dark** in Sydney in 1920. Several months after the land transfer, Elsie applied for, and was granted permission by the Port Macquarie Municipal Council, to build a house on the land. The house was erected by Mr. **Deards** and in November 1928, ‘...with her children, [she had] settled down in the neat little cottage, built to her own design, on the old gaol site’. Two years later, she purchased the well-known Port Macquarie property *Arncliffe* and moved there with her family.

The next transfer of the land took place on 7 May 1936 when Elsie **Dark** sold the property to Phyllis **Dulhunty**, wife of Robert Venour **Dulhunty**, a local surveyor. Phyllis retained ownership for just 12 months before selling it to Charles **Sexton** on 13 May 1937 for £775, with the house valued at £500.

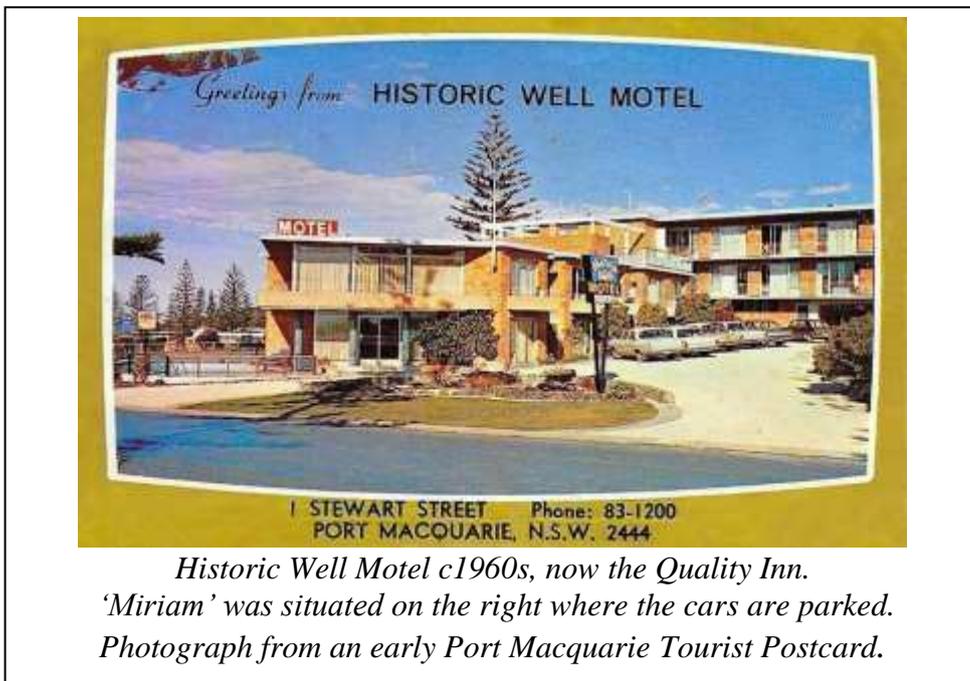
Charles **Sexton** was born in Adelaide SA and after running an extensive garage business in Dubbo, retired to Port Macquarie in the mid-1930s aged about 50. He married Ruby **Crisp** in

Sydney in 1915, the sister of Les **Crisp** who later became Mayor of Port Macquarie. Charles purchased several properties in Port Macquarie (including property in both William and Munster Streets), but the Stewart Street property appears to have only been used as a 'rental'.

In 1946, the property was the subject of a court case when Howard Henry **Barnett**, a local hairdresser and former member of the RAAF, discovered the house was empty. He sought to occupy the house with his family over winter for a cheaper than usual rent, which was granted. This legal matter was fully reported in the newspaper and this case was the first time the house name *Miriam* is found in the local newspaper. In a later court hearing and after living in *Miriam* between 17 July 1946 and 5 March 1947 without paying rent, Howard **Barnett** was ordered to pay Charles **Sexton** £56 in rent at £1/15/0 per week.

An interesting sideline to *Miriam* occurred in 1953 when Charles **Sexton** arranged for local Real Estate Agent, Peter **Dann** to handle its sale. However, when the sale 'fell through' to a potential purchaser from Kempsey, Peter decided he had had a '...lot of bad luck lately...' and purchased a ticket in 'Tatts' which won him £25,000! The property was eventually sold in 1954, several years before Charles **Sexton** passed away in Port Macquarie in 1960.

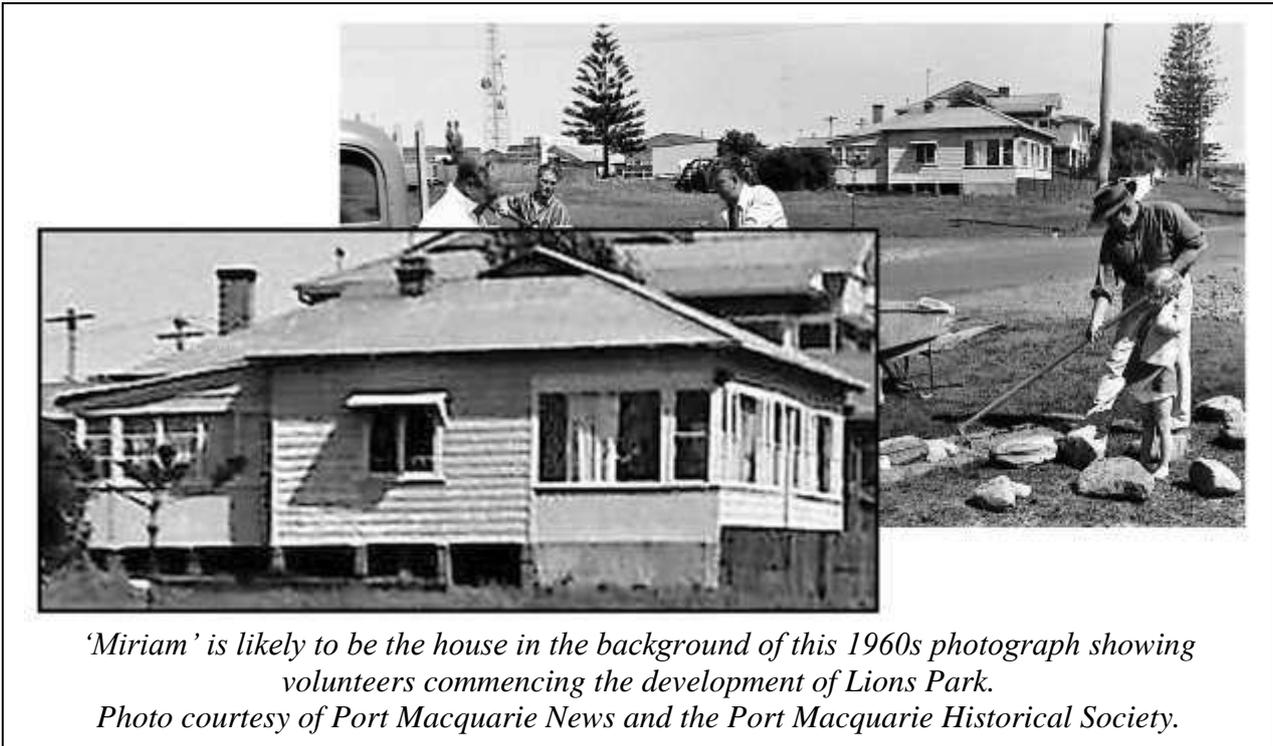
The new owner of *Miriam* was Shirley **Ross**, wife of John **Ross**, a grazier from Glen Morrison via Walcha. The transfer of ownership took place on 9 April 1954 and it appears *Miriam* was purchased as a 'rental'. This is based on a letter to the Editor regarding fluoridation appearing in the *Port Macquarie News* in March 1964 signed by 'A. **Doughty**, 3 Stewart Street Port Macquarie'.



After owning the property for 10 years, Shirley **Ross** sold it to Anthony 'Tony' John **York** (1925-2004), a builder from Punchbowl, with the transfer taking place on 24 March 1964. Tony York was the son of Albert and Amy **York** (of 'Mrs. York's Garden' fame) who had retired to Port Macquarie in 1959.

Tony later moved to Port Macquarie after purchasing the corner block at 1 Stewart Street Port Macquarie in August 1959. Subsequently, he amalgamated the two blocks of land at 1 and 3

Stewart Street upon which he arranged for the Historic Well Motel to be erected, and as a result, the old house at 3 Stewart Street, affectionately known as *Miriam*, was demolished. The motel was opened in December 1966 and built around a convict well, reputed to be over 30 metres deep.



*'Miriam' is likely to be the house in the background of this 1960s photograph showing volunteers commencing the development of Lions Park.*

*Photo courtesy of Port Macquarie News and the Port Macquarie Historical Society.*

Sources: NSW Land Record Services and various newspapers especially the *Port Macquarie News* and *Hastings River Advocate* (1920-1966). Full details available on request.

## MY MISSING SOLDIER FINALLY FOUND

*Yvonne Davidson*

My late husband's maternal grandfather, James Trail **Thomson**, died in 1966 so I never had the chance to meet him. He had an older brother, George Taylor **Thomson**, who died in the First World War, but we had no details. My husband's maternal grandmother died in 1990 and information from my mother-in-law was that she had George's *'Dead Man's Plaque'* but it went missing after she died. Of course, this would have had all the information on it that I needed, but we had no idea where the plaque went and, since the **Thomsons** are a large family, I was reluctant to start asking questions. If I had only known about it sooner!!

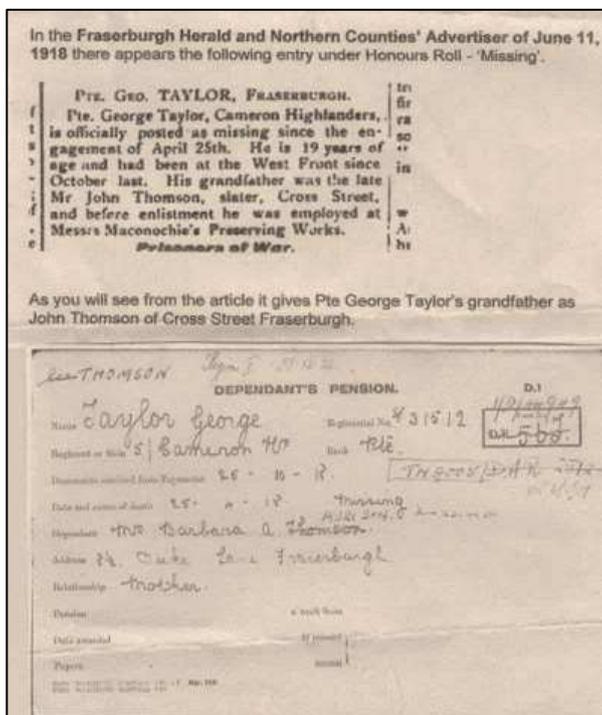
I did all the usual things – Nominal Roll drew a blank. The local War Memorial had a George **Thomson** (with no date) and a George **Taylor** (KIA (killed in action) on 27 April 1918) but no George Taylor **Thomson**. I checked with the local library and they couldn't help, but one of the staff was doing a study of the Memorial and had found that names had been missed, so was researching to find more information.

My mother-in-law had two brothers who had belonged to the Gordon Highlanders, so I approached the Gordon Highlanders Museum in Aberdeen, Scotland for help. The researcher

I dealt with became very interested in my story, however, like me, he kept hitting “brick walls” with the name, and we both decided it was time to think outside the box and go for George **Taylor** – I hadn’t tried this before because there are **Taylor**s in the town.

Now I think I should point out that the parents had four children but did not marry until the youngest, James Trail, was 4 years old – it is understood in the family that the husband was the biological father. The marriage was cause for an interesting discussion at our Library’s “Coffee and Chat” as, when I obtained the Marriage Certificate, it was what is known in Scotland, as an “Irregular Marriage” and was made official by Sheriff’s Warrant – because, as stated, they already had four children they couldn’t have a church or registry marriage. The husband was William **Murison** and the wife was Barbara Anderson **Thomson** but the children were all registered as **Thomson**. It will become clear later, why I have mentioned this information.

As my researcher dug deeper into this mystery, he finally found what we were looking for. Whether George did it on purpose or whether it was a clerical error we will never know, but it appears he was enlisted as George **Taylor**. We don’t know the date of his enlistment, but he was born in December 1898, so he was only 15 or 16 when war broke out. Information obtained from the National War Memorial of Scotland shows he was originally a member of the Lovat Scouts, Service No. 4183, and was later attached to 5th Battalion Queen’s Own Cameron Highlanders where his Service Number was changed to S/31512 – he was killed in action in France near Flanders on 25 April 1918. His place of birth is shown as Fraserburgh, Aberdeenshire, which is correct, and my researcher could find no George **Thomson** with matching birth details – he found three Gordon Highlanders, but they did not match.

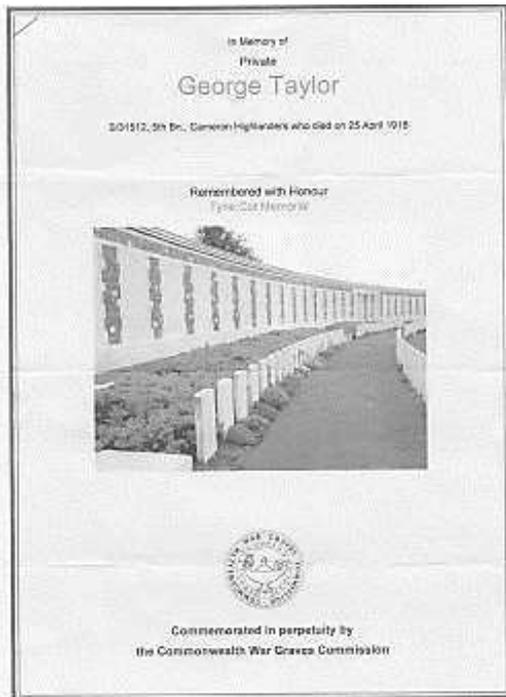


George **Taylor** is commemorated on the Tyne Cot Memorial in West-Vlaanderen, Belgium. I now know that the George **Taylor** who was KIA on 27 April 1918 and recorded on the local Memorial, is my soldier and although the date is wrong, the supporting documentation (left) from the local paper as well as the copy of the Dependant’s Pension Card, proves that this information is correct.

I already knew about his grandfather, John **Thomson** – he was a slater (roof tiler) who fell off a roof and fractured his skull ten years before George was born. As for the Dependant’s Pension Card, a note had been added in the top left corner “*See THOMSON*” and the dependant, Mrs. Barbara Anderson **Thomson**, had a correction to “*Murison*” for her surname. My researcher also found George

**Taylor**’s Soldiers Effects Register and this has “*or Thomson*” added to it in different handwriting and ink, possibly at a later date. I also have copies of several other documents to

do with his medal entitlements – I have to wonder whatever happened to the medals but that will be a further mystery never to be solved. I also have a copy of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission Commemorative Certificate for Pt. George Taylor from the Tyne Cot Memorial – the 5th Battalion Queen's Own Cameron Highlanders was in action at the battle of the Lys (Ypres), Belgium, on 25th April, 1918, so it appears that this is where George died.



So after nearly 12 months of research by my museum researcher and much frustration on my part, I now know when George Taylor Thomson died and, though he has no known grave, at least he is remembered in Belgium and at home. I have made up a dossier on this research and, when the virus will allow, I intend to present it to the Fraserburgh Library on behalf of the family.

An interesting side note is that my husband's paternal grandfather joined the Seaforth Highlanders in World War I and was transferred to the Cameron Scottish Rifles – he also had two different service numbers, which puzzled me until I found that he was attached to two different regiments and hence had two service numbers. Other Scottish researchers who have had this same problem might like to note that new Service Numbers appear to have been issued with a change of regiment.

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## FOOTSTEPS CONTRIBUTIONS



The next edition of Footsteps will be published in February 2021 and members are invited to submit stories and articles to the [editor@pmdfhs.org.au](mailto:editor@pmdfhs.org.au) by **Sunday 24 January 2021** so they can be included in the February issue. Next time we would like to hear about one of your Ancestors whom you really admire – please tell us his/her story and why you admire that person so much.

However this topic is only a 'suggestion' as other stories about any topic relating to your research or discoveries, or on any topic that might be helpful to our members are also sought and gratefully received.

Articles should be limited to between 1500–1550 words with up to four photos, or up to 1800 words without photos. It is always important when researching to cite your references and sources. When inserting the references or sources in your articles, it is requested that you use numbers i.e. 1,2,3, etc. (not Roman Numerals) and that you place them as 'endnotes' not 'footnotes.'

Stories that are submitted for publication in Footsteps should generally be the work of the author or the contributor submitting the story. If the writing is not the work of the author, please seek permission from the original author where possible, and indicate the source of the work when the article is submitted.

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## THE DINA DIARY – NO 15

*Ken Hunt*

### *Taking advantage of our COVID lockdown time*

One positive thing about COVID-19 lockdown is that it gives us more time for our hobbies. And so, over the past six or so months you would have found me working through my genealogy brickwalls or simply watching more TV. As to the latter, I recently viewed a documentary on Netflix called *Three Identical Strangers*. It explores the lives of triplets born in the USA who are adopted as babies by three different families. They each live in ignorance of their identical siblings until a series of incidents in the 1980s brought them together at age 19. A local newspaper reports on their story which is picked up by the national media and for a year or two they become minor celebrities. I will not give away the ending, except to say that what should have been a happy situation rapidly goes downhill.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we don't have to wait to "bump into your twin coming around a corner" – to use a quote from the show – as a DNA test can be done from the safety of our own home. And therein lies a problem. At the end of my last DNA Diary, I wrote that:

*"We test ... to prove that our 5xG grand-parents are indeed who we thought they would be. And if they're not, then this is when things get VERY interesting."*

Genealogy has always been about finding skeletons in family closets, but DNA testing has facilitated an increase both in the number of skeletons unearthed and the number of people who discover them. AncestryDNA has recently reported that over 18 million people have tested with that site alone. Add to this a further 10 million from the second largest site 23andMe and, even accounting for those who may have tested at both sites, it's a figure that is roughly the equivalent of the Australian population.<sup>1</sup>

Over the years, there have been a lot of "feel-good" stories told of adoptees meeting up with their biological families, but a few horror stories have surfaced. Every Christmas for the last four or five years, DNA testing kits have been given "just for fun".

Most test to discover their ethnicity – that makeup of nationalities informing us of our recent past. Those of us who believe we are 100% (enter the country of your choice here), find ourselves to be a fusion of cultures – some of which may no longer exist. Ethnicity is the entertaining stuff of DNA and this is where many people stop. The Christmas present has provided amusement, a topic of conversation over a festive dinner, and like many such gifts it is eventually discarded and forgotten.

But there are other recipients, not necessarily genealogists, who are curious about their shared matches – will Cousin Bill or Auntie Flo show up on my list? If they do, then all is right in the world and the gift may also go on to be abandoned – but there are those who don't see a Bill or a Flo as they expected. Questions start forming – *Why don't we share DNA? Who do they match if not me? And then: Is it me or is it them who's the odd one out?*

According to the Shared cM project, we share an average of 2,600cM with full siblings and about 1,700cM with any half-siblings.<sup>2</sup> In fact when I checked my match list on AncestryDNA, my brother and I shared 2,640cM across 42 segments. Ancestry and the Shared cM Project both confidently determined that we were 100% full siblings. Similarly, a parent/child relationship, according to Shared cM, should share about 3,485cM. My son and I share 3,452 cM across 28 segments and again both sites confirmed that we enjoy a 100% parent/child connection.

But what happens when for all your life you have believed that the parent who reared you was biologically related – as were your brothers and sisters – but DNA testing tells you otherwise? A recent SBS program – *Insight: DNA Secrets* – posed the question:

*“Investigating our ancestry can help us connect with relatives and explore our heritage, but what happens when your search unexpectedly uncovers a long-held family secret? Insight talks to people who've had to rewrite their own personal history after a DNA test or document exposed a lifetime of lies?”<sup>3</sup>*

And some of the responses are harrowing.

In a similar vein, Lucy Ash wrote a story for the BBC titled *“The Christmas present that could tear your family apart”<sup>4</sup>* In it she writes about Jenny who *“decided to take a DNA test ‘just for fun’”*. She found that she shared just 1,700cM with her brother. Asking herself the question *“is it me or is it my brother?”* Jenny tested a close cousin and her other siblings proving that it was she who did not match them fully. Jenny even managed to discuss the topic with her widowed mother discovering that she was the product of an affair and that the man who raised her – deceased almost a decade before – was *“unaware [that] he was not her biological father”*.

*“It was like a new bereavement. I went through all these stages of grief,” she says. “It was something out of my control, there was no going back and no way to fix it.”*

Bill **Griffeth**, a retired USA television co-host, even wrote a book about his DNA experience.<sup>5</sup> Passionate about genealogy he took a test in 2012 in the process finding that the person he considered his father was not his biological father. He wrote:

*“If the results were correct, it meant that the family tree I had spent years documenting was not my own”*

The publicity blurb for his book cites:

*“Bill undertakes a quest to solve the mystery of his origins, which shakes his sense of identity. As he takes us on his journey, we learn about choices*

*made by his ancestors, parents, and others, and we see Bill measure and weigh his own difficult choices as he confronts the past”.*

So, taking a test is not all champagne, roses and locating our long-lost cousins – it can be earth-shattering too. DNA testing is a legacy we leave for our descendants, but at the same time it may unleash far-reaching consequences both for the test taker and others.

The question remains, should I test my DNA? The answer may be far from simple. On one hand it is a reasonably common occurrence for genealogists to find clues to paternity in a census or on a birth record. On the other, DNA testing affects the here and now. It directly impacts both us and our loved ones by providing us with scientifically based evidence that is factual and irrefutable. Unfortunately, sometimes those facts can be distressing. We, and the people whose tests we manage, must fully understand – or have it explained to them – not only the rewards but also the risks.

So in summary, when about to purchase a DNA test – especially as a gift for someone else – we must be conscious of the fact that for some of us it may not be the gift that keeps on giving. Some of these surprises may be positive – finding long lost relatives or a brand-new family or finally smashing through that ancient brick wall – but to others these surprises may be devastating. But of course, we knew that didn't we? Because we are genealogists.

### ***Currently Reading***

A few weeks ago, I purchased the Kindle version of *DNA Demystified: Unravelling the Double Helix* by Alan **McHughen**<sup>6</sup>. The book presumes to “offer an informal yet authoritative guide to the genetic marvel of DNA”. And in many ways it does, starting with a quite detailed study of our genome and moving on to how we use the science for many things including solving criminal cold-cases, identifying and investigating ancient remains, health diagnosis, personalised pharmaceuticals and more; right through, of course, to genealogy. There were times that I found his language somewhat complex, but it is usually mitigated a few pages later when the author explains his point in simpler terms, or tells a joke or writes something fascinating such as:

*“Humans are rather ordinary in the amount of DNA we carry in our genome. Rats and wheat... both have 42 chromosomes... while rice has 24 and fruit flies a mere 8. But before we start feeling superior with our 46 chromosomes in each cell, consider that water buffalo and potatoes each have 48 chromosomes per cell. And the total amount of DNA per human cell, 3.1 billion base pairs, [A, T, C and G] is swamped by, among other things, the marbled lungfish, with 133 billion base pairs.”*

In general, the tone of the book is light, entertaining and easy to understand. The author strives to clear away urban myths such as DNA “skips a generation” or that we are “unique” as a species. About ethnicity he writes:

*“There is no genetic basis to what we call race or ethnicity. And, while we're at it, there is no such thing as genetic 'purity' either”.*

So there!

And as for the mystery of life, DNA manages to kick a few goals too. Every living thing on this planet is made up of DNA composed of the same four chemical base pairs thereby confirming that there could only have been a single origin or initiation of life on Earth.

*“...a compelling argument against multiple life initiations using DNA as the genetic material is the DNA language... the DNA base sequence uses the same language to call for amino acids when synthesizing specific proteins. [The codon<sup>7</sup>] CCA always calls for the amino acid proline. If we found some creatures in which CCA called for, say, glycine or serine that would argue against a single life initiation event. But there are no known bacteria, plants, animals, or other such creatures for which CCA calls for any amino acid other than proline.”*

And if you're still not convinced, he offers three or four more DNA arguments in support.

The final chapters discuss the ethics and morality of genetically modified food and agriculture, including how we are starting to personalise medicine and pharmaceuticals. And we are even close to being able to genetically modify humans. While we have been genetically engineering animals (for example dogs, sheep, cattle) for millennia, should we do the same to our children simply because we can? Is it beneficial or even moral to change genes to make our offspring more intelligent, or better at sport, or to cure an existing or potential disease, or a thousand and one other “improvements”?

All in all, it's a worthwhile and informative book. I'm enjoying reading it.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://mccrindle.com.au/insights/blog/australias-population-to-reach-25-million/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://dnainter.com/tools/sharedcmv4>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.sbs.com.au/ondemand/video/1785950275564/dna-secrets>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/stories-46600325>

<sup>5</sup> Griffith, Bill, *The Stranger in My Genes: A memoir*, 2016; New England Historic Genealogical Society.

<sup>6</sup> McHughen, A; *DNA Demystified: Unravelling the Double Helix*, Oxford University Press, 2020, 390 pages. Available as a hard copy book or a Kindle e-book

<sup>7</sup> A codon is a trinucleotide sequence of DNA or RNA that corresponds to a specific amino acid. The genetic code describes the relationship between the sequence of DNA bases (A, C, G, and T) in a gene and the corresponding protein sequence that it encodes. The cell reads the sequence of the gene in groups of three bases. There are 64 different codons: 61 specify amino acids while the remaining three are used as stop signals. Source: National Human Genome Research Institute; <https://www.genome.gov/genetics-glossary/Codon>

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## Herons Creek Man's Luck Still Out

A run of bad luck which began for a Heron's Creek man when his home was burned down before Christmas [1953], was continued last Thursday when he was bitten by a brown snake. The man, Noel **Kennedy**, was driving a tractor on his father's property when a snake coiled around his arm. He tried to brush it off quickly with his free arm when the snake struck savagely at his neck. **Kennedy** was taken to Wauchope Hospital for treatment, where his condition was later reported as satisfactory.

Source: *Northern Champion*, 22 Jan 1954, page 1 <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article161022471>

## SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP FEES

	Renewals	New Members*	
	Payable at 1st July each year	1st July to 30th June	1st Jan to 30th June
Single	\$30.00	\$35.00	\$20.00
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<i>Footsteps</i> Journal editions—November, February, May, August	4 issues included in Membership fees		
	Subscription is available to Non-Members at \$15.00 for one year.		

\*Includes a one-off \$5.00 joining fee.

## FAMILY HISTORY RESEARCH

The Society will undertake family history research for an initial fee of \$20 and will include a list of records used, entry into *Footsteps* (where appropriate) and suggestions regarding other resources. There may be an additional fee for further research.

Please make your initial enquiry to the Research Officer at [secretary@pmdfhs.org.au](mailto:secretary@pmdfhs.org.au) and include as many details as possible about the person/family and any other relevant information including sources already researched. Alternatively, enquire via mail and include a business size, stamped, self-addressed envelope to the Research Officer, PO Box 1359, Port Macquarie NSW 2444.

## INFOEMAIL

Our Society newsletter, *InfoEmail*, is emailed on a regular basis to members who have provided an email address. Remember to keep your email address up to date so you do not miss out. Please email us if you are not receiving the *InfoEmail*.

If you do not have an email address, but have a computer with internet access, the *InfoEmails* are available on our website at [www.pmdfhs.org.au](http://www.pmdfhs.org.au) to download and read. Journal reviews now have their own separate tab on the left side of the Society's website.

## RESEARCH ASSISTANCE

General assistance with family history – local, Australian and overseas – is available for members and non-members in the Local Studies Room at the Port Macquarie Library. Our volunteers are normally on duty to help on most Tuesdays and Wednesdays from 10am to 3pm, with a break over Christmas, but this service is temporarily suspended due to Covid-19 restrictions within the Library.

## RESEARCH SUPPORT GROUP

Similarly, the Research Support Group for members, previously held at Port Macquarie-Hastings Library in the Technology Room from 1pm to 3pm on the Wednesdays, has been suspended until further notice, but continues to be conducted via 'Zoom'. The topic is advertised in the latest *InfoEmail* and at the most recent General Meeting.

## PUBLICATIONS FOR SALE

<b>Publication Name</b>	<b>Member Price</b>	<b>Normal Price</b>	<b>Weight</b>
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An order form is available at: [www.pmdfhs.org.au](http://www.pmdfhs.org.au) – please complete the order form and send with your payment to: The Secretary, Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society Inc. PO Box 1359, Port Macquarie NSW 2444.

Cheques and money orders should be made payable to Port Macquarie & Districts Family History Society Inc. or alternatively, send an email to [secretary@pmdfhs.org.au](mailto:secretary@pmdfhs.org.au) to obtain the Society's banking details, and direct deposit reference, in order to pay by direct deposit via the internet. Pre-payment is required; however Local Government Libraries can be invoiced.

# **PORT MACQUARIE & DISTRICTS FAMILY HISTORY SOCIETY INC.**

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## **Our Research Home**

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## **Our Meeting Room**

CC Mac Adams Music Centre  
Gordon Street  
Port Macquarie NSW 2444  
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