

# TRIBUTE

AUTUMN, 2014

FREE PUBLICATION

## St Marys & District Historical Society Inc - Quarterly Newsletter

PO Box 640, ST MARYS NSW 1790 – Street Address - St Marys Corner, Mamre Rd, St Marys – Parking via 29 Swanston Street.

Wednesday – 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2014 was our open day at the Chambers building for Senior's Week. Our theme was the "Storm clouds of war gathering in 1914". The 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the beginning of World War One with the enlistment of St Mary's volunteers from August to December 1914. In attendance were members: Carol Volkiene, Norma Thorburn, Lyn Forde, Margaret Dwyer, Paul & Margaret Mills, Tony & Sheila Biddulph, Eric Kent. These photos in the Chambers were taken by Lyn Forde & Paul Mills



**“War clouds gathering over Europe”**

Life and working conditions in Australia in the early 1900's were harsh, dangerous and unsanitary, however, we had a reputation throughout the late 1800's as the 'working man's paradise' mainly because of the adoption of the eight-hour day and other benefits that were the envy of Europe. For the manual labourer's of Australia, usually of the working class, work was tough and uncomfortable with low pay and long hours. Despite these conditions the workers were too scared to complain for fear of being dismissed from their jobs and unable to provide for their families. The middle class were usually white collar or professional workers who undertook less physical work and received a higher pay. Many manual labourers in Australia worked in the rural sector - some were sheep shearers who had to shear 100 sheep just to earn £1, and if their work was not to the satisfaction of their employer, the shearer's wages were withheld. The shearers also had to endure unsanitary and vermin infested conditions in the shearing sheds and the accommodation that was provided for them. So it was on the 30th July, 1914 when an encrypted cablegram from the British Government to the Government of Australia informed that there was imminent danger of war. Every Australian at that time knew of a quarrel between Austria and Serbia with the intervention of Germany, but few realized that the Emperor and the German Government were deliberately employing dangerous war rhetoric with Great Britain and that it was possible that Britain might be dragged into any international struggle. In Australia, it was thought that if Great Britain was involved, then what was the position of those British colonies that inhabited lands far from the "old world" and were loosely bound together under the name of the British Empire? Of the people who had sprung from "British stock", only the United States had left the Empire and grown to maturity as an independent nation. The other offshoots like Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and Newfoundland were still adolescent. The world regarded them and their motherland as one community. Foreign nations had begun to know something of several British colonies as producers of raw materials and of new ideas, but their population was still in its infancy and was not yet a factor in international politics. Although the British Dominions had reached the stage where they were fast developing foreign relations, the British Government still undertook the conduct of their dealings with other countries. Here in Australia we were apprehensive that we would be bound to provide armed forces other than those we individually chose to provide, or would commit to support a policy that we might not individually approve of. All of the "British" colonies at that time, had established within their own coasts, some organization for home defence as well as voluntary civilian military service. Our St Mary's volunteers who enlisted in August 1914, sought excitement from their daily drudge of low paid or no paid work. They would be getting paid to fight for their country and besides "it will all be over before Christmas" was the sentiment at that time. They were going to fight for their family and their homeland but they soon found out that they were enlisting under the "British" war machine and were not happy. Of course we know that after the incompetence of the British War Cabinet and the disastrous Gallipoli campaign, the Australian and New Zealand volunteers were finally incorporated under their own Government and from that time were known as the "Diggers" of ANZAC. I have found thirteen St Marys' volunteers enlisted between August and December 1914 and eight of them were either KIA or died of wounds or disease and never returned to their homeland.

Lest we Forget.



On Friday 7<sup>th</sup> March our members were invited to Lorraine Stacker's book launch held in the Penrith Civic Centre. The book titled "**Penrith - The Makings of a City**" had been in production for several years and was a culmination of research with the help from many local historical sources including our Society who was represented by our Vice-President & Research Officer Lyn Forde who took the following photos.



Mayor Ross Fowler, Lorraine & Former Mayor Pat Sheehy OAM



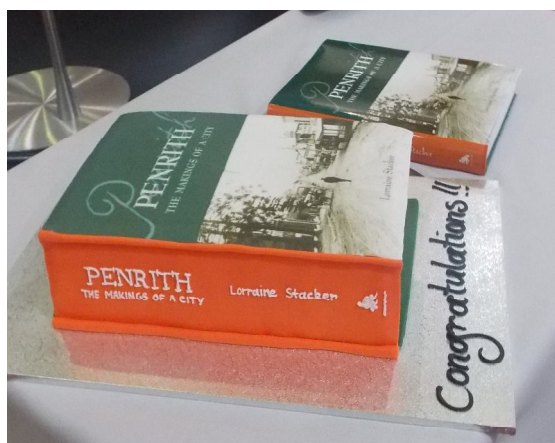
Lorraine talks about the book



Historian Pat Curry receives flowers (Back to camera)



Pat Sheehy, Lorraine & Ross Fowler cut the cake *Photo courtesy of Penrith Council*



The cake next to the book



Colin Stevenson – Services Manager Penrith Library *Photo courtesy of Lyn Forde*

Some of our members attended the **Penrith History Conference** on Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> March at the Joan Sutherland Centre where we had a stall to sell our publications. As usual the conference was well attended and congratulations go to Lorraine Stacker, Allison Spencer and volunteers from Penrith Library. The program was very well presented and enjoyed by our members Carol, Norma, Margaret Dwyer, Marie and Lyn.



*Photos courtesy of Penrith Council & Lyn Forde*



Our Society has been approached by Penrith Council to once again give our comments regarding the funding Council has received to add an access at the back of the building (which is now the FRONT of the building) via a ramp and refurbishment of the Chambers toilet area for new disabled toilets. Treasure Norma Thorburn and our President Carol Volkiene met with the Council representatives at the Chambers to give the Society's view on how this should proceed with as little disruption to the activities held at the Chambers as possible, as well as keeping as much floor area that is available for the Society's display and open day activities. It is thought that Council will be starting the renovations within the next few months. We have also been advised that the next stage of the refurbishment of Victoria Park will be undertaken by Council as funding for this ongoing project has been received. Also at this meeting Council discussed the next part of the refurbishment of South Creek Park to house the other Bennett wagons that are being held for this project at the Council depot.

### **Thorndale School (Industries) building has been demolished at Werrington**



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The St Marys & District Historical Society meets every 4<sup>th</sup> Saturday at 1 pm - at the St Marys Precinct "Chambers" Building - Mamre Road, St Marys. **No meetings in January or December.**

Patron of our Society is Tanya Davies - Liberal Member of Parliament for Mulgoa.

**ALL WELCOME**

Back issues of the "Tribute" can be found on our website at  
[www.stmaryshistoricalandsociety.org](http://www.stmaryshistoricalandsociety.org)

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Please contact: us on 0450132181 & leave a message

(While care is taken to ensure that all articles are accurate, the opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Society)

Any comments on this Newsletter are encouraged

PLEASE, DON'T THROW OUT AUSTRALIAN HISTORY. OLD PHOTOGRAPHS, BOOKS, LETTERS, RECEIPTS, DOCKETS, NEWSPAPERS & MAGAZINES. IF YOU HAVE ANYTHING YOU ARE NOT SURE ABOUT PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HISTORICAL SOCIETY