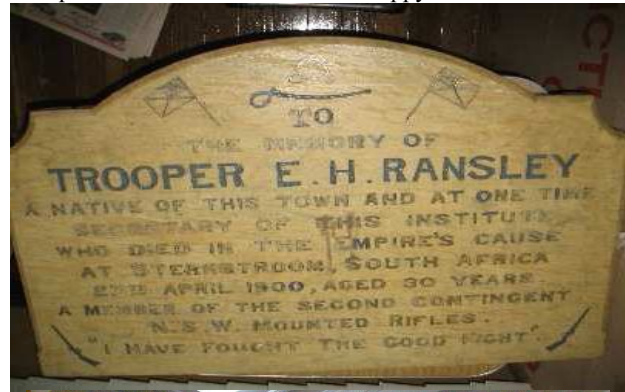


**St Marys & District Historical Society Inc - Quarterly Newsletter**  
PO Box 640, ST MARYS NSW 1790 – Street Address (St Marys Corner, Mamre Rd, St Marys )

**BOER WAR UNION JACK FLAG** - (Photos taken by members of the Society)

The Society was given a donation a few years ago of a memorial plaque and a ratty old Union Jack, moth eaten and stuck to a board. The frame originally had glass but it had been broken many years ago. Some of our members remembered this flag that had been mounted on the inside of the old Mechanic's Institute on the Great Western Highway at St Marys. The memorial plaque was placed above the outside door. This building was pulled down in the 1970's and the flag and memorial disappeared. The memorial plaque was dedicated to Trooper Edwin "Ted" Ransley, who, before enlisting to go to the Sudan to fight the Boers, was the Secretary of the Institute and highly regarded by the members and the townspeople of St Marys and Llandilo where his family lived.

Edwin was a member of the "A" Squadron Mounted Rifles under the command of Captain J M Antill. Unfortunately, Trooper Ransley died in South Africa of enteric fever (typhoid). The flag was the first raised over Bloemfontein when the territory was occupied by Lord Roberts and the British and Australian Troops. Edwin's dying wish was for his Sergeant H C Gates to return it to his home town of St Marys and to the Mechanic's Institute. This was granted. The Historical Society had applied for, and was approved a grant from the Veteran's Affairs "Saluting Their Service Commemorations Grant" for most of the cost to restore the flag and the shortfall was made up of donations from the public and St Mary's Rotary. On the 31<sup>st</sup> July David Bradbury MP unveiled the restored flag at the "Chambers" building with members of the Ransley family as special guests of the Society and the Mayor Kevin Cramer and several Council Representatives. It is now on view to the public and all our members are happy that it has been saved.



**WERRINGTON HOUSE** is up for sale. The house once overlooked the village of Werrington named after the Werrington Estate; the land was originally included in the acreage of the Estate. Werrington House was built by Robert Copland Lethbridge – third son of Christopher and Mary (Nee Copland) Lethbridge of Madford, Launceston, Cornwall, England. He had two brothers and seven sisters, none of them came to Australia except Harriet, wife of Admiral Phillip Parker King. Robert Copland Lethbridge was born in Cornwall in the year 1798 and on the 25<sup>th</sup> July, 1826 he married Mary King in England who was the youngest daughter of Captain Philip Gidley King (Governor of New South Wales 1800 – 1806). In coming to NSW he was no doubt influenced by the fact that his wife's mother and family returned to Sydney to take up grants to the King family at South Creek (St Marys), these grants having been confirmed by Governor Bligh. Mary King's grant was adjacent to the Estate established by the King family and was named Dunheved. The pioneer Lethbridge family sailed from England in the "Cumberland" in 1826 and after a long voyage arrived in Sydney Harbour on 24<sup>th</sup> January, 1827. Robert Copland Lethbridge was promised around the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 1828, 2,560 acres of land as a primary grant in the County of Georgiana and the Deed of this Estate afterwards called "Leighwood" was not executed until 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1840. An adjoining area of 640 acres was also granted to him on the 29<sup>th</sup> February, 1840. In the meantime, Robert Copland Lethbridge decided to build on the grant to Mary Lethbridge and acquired some 600 odd acres adjoining this grant making an Estate of 1,291 acres all told. Work commenced on the house in 1829 and the building was completed in 1832 after many set-backs from contractors and others. The material for the house was quarried from the sandstone deposits in an adjacent paddock of Dunheved owned by Mary's brother, Admiral Phillip Parker King. The timber used for wall plates, rafters, shingles, etc were ironbark, imported cedar doors, wainscoting, moulding etc were supplied without stint. The sandstone was said to have run out before the out-buildings were built, these were therefore built either in wood (stables) or pise. It may be of interest to note how some of the delay to the building operations came about. In 1829 the first sawyer at Werrington cleared off because he could not get one of Harriet King's servants to marry him, the second sawyer was soon jailed for cattle stealing from adjacent properties. These men were hard to replace as skilled labour was in very short supply at that time. A further story relates that Mary Lethbridge when visiting to see how the building was progressing discovered that the stairway, by oversight, had been omitted and that is said to be the reason why the stairs are so steep. The home was occupied in 1838 and remained in the possession of Robert Copland Lethbridge and his wife Mary until his death on the 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1865 and was then in the possession of Mary Lethbridge until her death on 17<sup>th</sup> December, 1872 when the Estate passed to her eldest son, Christopher.



In 1860, the property and house were leased to Sir Henry Parkes and Lady Parkes farmed at Werrington until 1871. During occupation of the Parkes family there was considerable trouble when trying to collect the rent as Sir Henry was noted as a "non payer" and records show his total disclosed debts in his various bankruptcies totalled £146,000 however, the fact of Sir Henry Parkes' residency gives the old home much historical value according to all authorities. The whole property was sold by Christopher Lethbridge in 1882 to a Mr. Montgomery who quickly sold to – or was dummy for – a Land Syndicate who sub-divided the land into blocks of one, five and twenty acres. Werrington House, together with some 120 acres – including reserved roads, was purchased by John Harris of Harris and Shanes Park, South Creek and deeded by him to Phillip Gidley King and on the death of Phillip Gidley King passed to his wife, Mabella Winton King who occupied Werrington House until 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1910, when the house

and its contents were purchased by William Baron Lethbridge, grandson of Robert Copland Lethbridge. He lived there with his wife Lillian until her death in 1945 and then up to the time of his own death in May 1948, when the property passed to John King Lethbridge who occupied the home and grazing area was used under lease to William Cooper and Nephews of the Welcome Trust for experimental and research work in parasitical diseases of sheep, the Senior Research Officer being a Mr. Downing of Berkhamsted, England. Whilst the house is classed as convict built, some of the workers were in reality assigned servants (ex-convicts) and were housed in small pise huts adjacent to the building. The larger building was used for storage purposes and was locked by bars and a heavy door to keep the assigned servants out, not in. Free workers were also employed on the construction of the house. During 1848 at the time of the Bank crash, Robert Copland Lethbridge who was a fairly large shareholder was required by the Bank of Australia to pay calls on the uncalled capital of his holding and was nearly forced into bankruptcy, owing to the general collapse of prices. All his stock was sold – cattle averaging around 10/- (ten shillings) per head and sheep 2/6 (two shillings & sixpence) per head. Eventually pressure by the Bank forced the mortgaging of Werrington House property to his brother in England and the subsequent sale of furniture, plant, etc to his brother-in-law Admiral Phillip Parker King. However, the Admiral immediately handed over these effects to his sister, Mary Lethbridge. The saving of Werrington House at the time must be conceded to Admiral King who was of extreme help to Robert Copland Lethbridge, both financially and personally, and his advice was considered paramount. The original furniture and content have been dispersed as was to be expected from so large a family, however, some good bits and pieces had found their way back to the old home. Regarding "Leighwood", this property was saved from foreclosure during the Bank crash as it was fortunately made over to Mary Lethbridge sometime before, but all stock had to be sold. "Leighwood" was left by Mary Lethbridge to her family and was eventually sold by Christopher Lethbridge.

**Luddenham Public School 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations**

- On Sunday, 15<sup>th</sup> August, our members Carol Volkiene, Norma & Tom Thurburn and Lyn Forde represented the Society by dressing in period costume and participating in the celebrations. The Society held a stall and Carol, Tom and Norma went in the parade while Lyn stayed with the stall. It was a pretty windy day with a great gust of wind blowing over our tent and had members of the public scrambling to retrieve our windblown publication and paperwork. We congratulate the school on their organisation of the celebrations which were very well received by those who attended the school and came back to the school for the festivities. We enjoyed the school children and others who dressed in costume and participated at the official opening. Great day had by all we were sure.



*Photo shows Carol, Norma, Lyn & Tom standing – photos courtesy of Lyn Forde*

On Monday and Tuesday, 6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup> September, University of Western Sydney students, along with Associate Professor Carol Liston were given an insight into the history of St Marys by our members Carol Volkiene (Secretary), Norma Thorburn (Treasurer & Tours Director) and Lyn Forde (President) as part of their studies at the University. Our Society members are always happy to participate in anything to do with the history of the St Marys area via tours and information available within the Society's files at the Chambers building. We would be only too pleased to hear from members of the public who are interested in the wealth of history that is St Marys and surrounding districts.

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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 Sister Mary Louise Petro

**ALL WELCOME**

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

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Please contact: us on 0450132181

**(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**

Once again this year's Spring Festival was cancelled due to rain. So much effort goes into this celebration, including our Society's participation, that we hope the new date of Saturday, 30<sup>th</sup> October will hold the "Spring" weather for all.

### **2010 Back to St Marys Reunion**

On Sunday, 12<sup>th</sup> September the Society held its annual Back to St Marys Reunion at the Chambers building. We had a great attendance by members of the public and once again thank Paul Mills for his attendance with his collection of St Mary's school photos for everyone to enjoy and remember. The Society held a Sausage Sizzle and thanks to the following members who helped out on the day. Margaret Dwyer welcomed people at the door, our soon to be new member Sheila Bell helped out with selling raffle tickets. On the BBQ was Vic Volkiene and Carol Volkiene, Norma and Tom Thorburn Lyn Forde and Jim Anderson kept things running smoothly. We had good weather for the day and look forward to seeing you next year.



*Photos courtesy of Lyn Forde*

**UPDATE ON** Lorraine Stacker's book on the history of Penrith & District.

Originally due to be published in November this year, the publishing date has been pushed forward to around March, 2011.

**DON'T FORGET** - 2011 marks 150 years of education at St Marys Public School, Princess Mary Street, St Marys. To celebrate they are planning an event to be held on the June long weekend in 2011. If you are, or you know a past student from the school or was a teacher there they would love to hear from you. They are also interested in any photos or memorabilia including uniforms, school books, awards etc. Please contact the school to learn more or become involved in planning for this event on (02) 9623-1968. To buy a paver you can download the form at their website at [www.stmarys-p.schools.nsw.edu.au](http://www.stmarys-p.schools.nsw.edu.au)