



# TRIBUTE

SUMMER 2011

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 Swanson Street.

**October Bus Trip** – Members of the Society attended the Penrith Council Architect’s Festival at the Joan on Saturday, 22<sup>nd</sup> October which was very informative and well attended by the public. Afterwards we were taken on a bus tour around Penrith Lakes, visiting Muru Mittaggar, Lander’s Inn, Hadley House and the Castlereagh cemetery. A pleasant day was had by all and our thanks to Penrith Council for hosting the festival.



Hadley House

Lander’s Inn



Castlereagh cemetery

Castlereagh Church

Mayor Greg Davies

**St Mary’s Corner Precinct Committee** meeting – the last meeting of the year, was held on Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November and attended by our new representative Caroline Volkiene (*our new President*). Past representative Lyn Forde (*now Vice-President*) was also invited to attend the meeting that was held at the Fairfield Heritage Museum as a Christmas outing for the Committee members. This museum is worth a visit as the site has been set up with replica and original heritage buildings from the area that include a blacksmith’s shop, school room and early slab homes.



Photos courtesy of Lyn Forde

**Bridal Display** - Our bridal display at the Chambers was extended until the end of November and proved very popular with the public. Once again our thanks goes to all those who donated wedding memorabilia for the display and a special thanks to those people who donated the garments permanently to the Society. Next year the Society will once again participate in the Senior's Week festivities so look out for advertisement on our activity to be held at the Chambers on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> March, 2012.

**Change of Positions** - new elections took place at our Annual General Meeting in September and the following members were elected:-

**President** – Caroline Volkiene

**Vice-President** – Lyn Forde

**Secretary** – Marie Koen

**Treasurer** - Norma Thorburn retained the position

### **Our Local History – Did you know?**

The two main thoroughfares in St Marys were unlit at night for a very long time. The Municipal Council was incorporated in 1890, but nothing was done until 1898 when the Mayor proposed that the Great Western Road and Queen Street be lit by eight kerosene lamps to the station. In 1903 the council again brought up the subject of lighting and called a public meeting to give ratepayers the opportunity to say whether or not there should be lights in the streets. More than 100 people turned up, but many of them were not ratepayers and had no right to vote. By 1907 lamps were erected along the Western Road and Queen Street but the lighting was so bad that civic minded citizens were volunteering to place lamps outside their premises along the road. From 1910 the lighting of the principal roads and streets with kerosene lamp standards were made and were attended to daily by a lamp lighter until the coming of electricity in 1931. The evening of 17th December, 1931 was a red-letter day for the citizens of St Marys, because it was then that their two main thoroughfares were illuminated with the brilliance of 600 candle power lamps by the use of Council electricity. The switch-on ceremony was performed at 8 pm by the Mayor, Alderman Robert Hope on a wooden platform especially built for the occasion on the awning of a butcher's shop on the corner of the Great Western Road and Queen Street. The evening ended with a banquet. (*Source: St Marys – Mt Druitt Star 29/8/2006*)

### **St Mary's residents who contributed donations towards the liquidation of the debt due on St Nicholas' Church, Penrith in 1854.**

William Dowling	James Norris
James F. Plunkett	Edward White
Samuel Hassell	Patrick English
Henry Nash	Patrick Roche
Michael Nash	Samuel Nelson
Margaret Lalor	James McGrath
Charles Ellis	Thomas Coyle
Thomas Harford	Thomas Harpur
Mrs Harford	John Griffin
Paul Harford	Patrick Lynch
John Best	James Payne
Mrs Collins	John Bootle
Thomas Beane Snr	John Martin
Thomas Beane Jnr	Joseph Bell
Margaret Beane	Michael Pigeon
James Landers	Thomas Spratbrow
William Cummins	John Collins
Mrs Cummins	James White
Maurice Ryan	George Nash
Mary Doyle	John Spellman
James Hackett	Eugene Daley
John & Henry Sherringham	Edward Cummins
John Whitford	William Ouxteston
Thomas Pike	James Burns
Thomas Perrin	Bridget Halloran
Martin Mulhair	William Martin
Thomas Egan	Matthew Hogan
Robert Egan	James Guinan
James Waite	Margaret McGrath
Bernard Maguire	

Everyone you talk to these days mentions that Christmas comes around too fast. They have to be adults because the kids don't notice. They know that some sort of present is waiting under the Christmas tree, and there it is in its fancy wrapping, some latest "must have" gadget for the young boys and girls of the district. Back in the 1950's, growing up in St Marys, I remember the family Christmas times we had and all the effort put in by the adults to make Christmas special. All our family and friends, including the neighbours, would get together to celebrate Christmas, with all the adults and children coming together, mainly at my house because we had an open front yard and a front veranda. Dad, with the help of some of the neighbourhood men, would get a real Christmas tree and pot it and it would stand pride of place in the front yard where all the females that could be gathered (and kids too) to decorate the tree with home made ornaments and fairy lights and tinsel to make it the best tree in the street. We had saved up all the silver bottle tops from the milk bottles and used the orange juicer to make silver Christmas bells, as well as crepe paper that was cut and pasted together to make yards of Christmas garlands and cotton wool to make the snow. We made our own Christmas cards and hats at school and saved our money to help buy the lollies. One of the neighbours would play Santa and another neighbour decked out his car to use as a sleigh. Santa would stand on the running board and be taken around the neighbourhood tossing those lollies to any kid who happened to see him on his way to our house. Once there, he would give out the presents that were under the tree, home made labels with each name, containing gifts such as "Annie Oakley" and "Roy Rogers" toy guns in holsters for boys and girls, of course the inevitable teddies, bride dollies and "golliwogs" (*no longer called that in this politically correct society*). A lot of the toys were made by the parents who enjoyed making them throughout the year, and delighted those kids who received them. The dolls were usually dressed by mothers who could sew and there were books for those children needing encouragement to read. Once the presents were all accounted for and opened to the delight of the children, the multitude of a home made feast was enjoyed by all. Carols were sung and the children and adults adjourned to nearby Victoria Park to play in the children's playground while the adults sat at the seats and enjoyed the local beverage from the nearby "Wagon Wheels" hotel. True, those were wonderful days to be a kid growing up and the most remembered. As the years roll on and we start to enter into old age, those kids of the 1950's now have grandchildren and great-grandchildren and it becomes harder to pay for all those presents, even if we make them ourselves. Christmas time for the adults has become increasingly stressful as they try to juggle with the hassles of having enough money for presents and the Christmas dinner. People are opting out of buying presents for the adults and just buying for the children, but with most of our children and our grandchildren now adults or almost adults, we find ourselves not buying presents and not getting any in return. What a sad state of events – no presents at Christmas! A lot of the 1950's kids find themselves alone at Christmas as their family has scattered to the four winds and not many come back for the "once loved" family gathering. I also remember a lot of Christmas dinners gathered around my Aunt and Uncle's home in Pages Road with my cousins and some friends of the family. We couldn't wait for the pudding, as we knew that a threepence or sixpence would be lurking there ready for us to find. After all the festivities were cleared away it was time for a sing-song and all the adults and kids would participate. All the old songs remembered and sung with gusto and afterwards, when us kids were getting tired, we were put to bed in our Aunt and Uncle's bed and sent to sleep listening to the adults frivolity as they played the much loved card games. Card game over, we were carried home to our own bed to dream of playing with all those wonderful toys we got on Christmas morning.

In 1998 in St Marys, the Town Centre Management Group purchased and erected a giant 13 metre high Christmas tree at the railway end of Queen Street. This tree was reputed to be the tallest potted Christmas tree in Australia at that time. It was the first time anything like this was celebrated at Christmas in St Marys. The tree was donated by "The Tree Doctor" Mark Hartley and it took over two and a half hours to set up. The Dunheved Fire Brigade was charged with the watering of the tree and the decoration of the tree was the task of the St Marys Rotary Club who had purchased 200 metres of fairy lights. A local choir sang Christmas Carols and donations of money from the local shopkeepers helped decorate some of the trees lining Queen Street. All in all it was one of the best Christmas's ever. There was great hopes of it carrying on in the years to come but that didn't eventuate. (*Source: St Clair-Erskine Park Advertiser*). Lyn Forde – Vice-President. (*The photo shows the Forde Christmas tree in the 1950's*). As published in the *Nepean News* December 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2011.



***The More You Believe the More You Get!***

*By Caroline Volkiene*

*Summertime, December, and Christmas cheer  
This all happens in the Southern Hemisphere.  
Warm wind whooshing, hair flying to our elation  
The speeding train pulled into the station.  
Holding hands we could all feel the rumbling  
And our tummies felt like they were tumbling.*

*The train conductor blew his whistle  
For the window seat we did bustle.  
For we all new that this day was going to be a treat  
Someone important we are going to meet  
Making a list checking it twice  
To see who has been naughty or nice?*

*We are on our way to see Santa  
Laughter in our voices and our hearts a canter  
Red, green, gold and silver  
There upon his throne, sat Santa  
Long white beard, and a booming  
Ho! Ho! Ho!*

*Talking to the children who were all aglow.*

*It was my turn to have my say  
And slowly all my fears died away.  
He looked into my heart and whispered,  
"The more you believe the more you get",  
So I knew this would be the best Christmas yet.*

*Big brothers Bub and Deg and little sister Cas  
What wonders we found under the Christmas tree,  
Green cosies that sparkled and big beach towels  
But where was my dolly I began to howl!*

*(Photo Courtesy of Carol Volkiene)*

*Then suddenly in front of me a big bright box  
And inside I found my dolly with golden locks.  
Christmas smells were coming my way  
Mummy's face all aglow, her loving eyes caressed us  
so.  
And once again, Santa's voice whispered in my heart  
"The more you believe the more you get",  
Loving, Giving and Sharing  
And yes, it was the best Christmas yet!*

Leading up to Christmas we would all help make Christmas decorations, paper chains, twisted crepe paper streamers; which would droop in the heat. Coloured paper cut into Christmas shapes then sprinkled with sparkles and cotton wool. Cotton wool was used as Santa's beard and for snow on the tree. My mum, aunts and cousins would catch the train into Sydney to do Christmas shopping and to see Santa. The whole day was very exciting and magical and we only ever saw ONE Santa!



*"Santa and Me" - Waltons, Broadway circ 1955*

**The members of the St Marys & District Historical Society wish you and yours a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. The Chambers will be closed from the 17<sup>th</sup> December 2011 until Wednesday, 1<sup>st</sup> February, 2012.**

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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**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**