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# **The Stonequarry Journal**

ISSN 1321-1439



Published by

Picton and District Historical and Family History Society Inc

Volume 17

March 2003

## Picton and District Historical and Family History Society Inc.

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Membership Fees – Due 1 July each year

Pensioners and school students:	\$15.00
Single:	\$20.00
Family	\$25.00

### Meetings

Meetings are held on the first Saturday of each month at 9.30 am except for January.

Meetings are held on the first floor of Wollondilly Public Library, Menangle Street, Picton.

## RESEARCH ROOM

The Research Room is located on the first floor of Wollondilly Public Library, Menangle Street, Picton.

### Opening Hours

On each Thursday from 10 am to 3 pm.

On the second and fourth Saturday of each month from 9.30 am to 12 Noon and at other times by appointment with the Librarian.

### RESEARCH FEES

Members:	Free
Non Members:	\$10.00 per hour + photocopying (first hour payable in advance)
Written Inquiries:	\$20.00 + photocopying

The Society does not hold itself responsible for opinions expressed or statements made by authors of papers in this Journal.

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**PUBLICATIONS**

The Marriage Register Index covers marriages in the Anglican Parish of Picton (first known as Stonequarry and The Oaks) from 1839 to 1963 and will be published in three volumes.

The first volume was published last June. Volume I covers the period 1839 to 1897. Volume II has now been released and covers the period 1898 to 1929.

Each marriage index contains the transcription of the relevant register, a party index, a parent index and a witness index.

**Cost:**

Volume I            \$15.00

Volume II           \$16.50

Postage for one book \$3.50

Postage for two books \$7.00

**STILL AVAILABLE**

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**SPECIAL – 2003 Calendars still available now \$5.00 plus postage of \$2.50**

The calendar contains 13 superb photographs suitable to frame.

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ISSN 1321-1439  
**The Stonequarry Journal**  
*Journal of the Picton & District  
 Historical and Family History  
 Society Inc.*

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## DOOMSDAY – 1860 – PICTON

...of droughts and flooding rains

Written by Elizabeth Villy

The great cycles of droughts and floods weave their way across the Australian landscape and into the psyche of its people. Poets and artists draw upon this phenomenon to create the myths of the land. The current drought is not a myth and is the worst for one hundred years. In 1860 the settlers experienced the worst flooding in living memory and offered prayers for the rain to cease.

In early February, 1860 the humid heat broke in a frenzy of storms and torrential rains. And the rain continued, swathing the Sydney basin and the land that surrounded it – the Goulburn Plains, Shoalhaven, Illawarra, Picton, Camden and Hawkesbury areas – leaving misery and ruin in its wake. The floods at Goulburn and Shoalhaven were so bad that a relief fund was set up in Sydney with £1500 donated by individuals and another £3000 by the government.

The people of Picton suffered the effects of the constant rain and bloated waterways that streamed from the hills surrounding the town. Picton was, during this pre-railway period, an agricultural society with farmers planting wheat, corn and potatoes. Livestock consisted of cows and poultry for domestic use and the breeding of cattle, horses and pigs for market. There was wholesale destruction of these crops and animals, together with cottages and fences being washed away. The mail coach had water to its floor when it attempted to cross the nearby Bargo River, leaving the townspeople without mail, news or newspaper for a week.

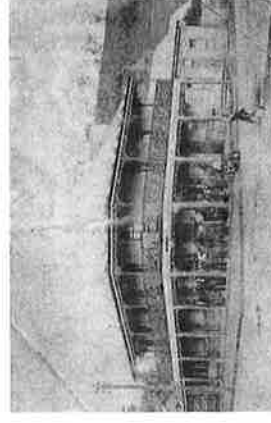
Rain returned in continual torrents on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May and the bridge over Stonequarry Creek was washed away. This flood was particularly damaging to Picton as the water poured from the Razorback range into the settlements and township causing great damage. As usual, all the roads were cut and it was not until the

## DONATION OF PHOTOGRAPHS

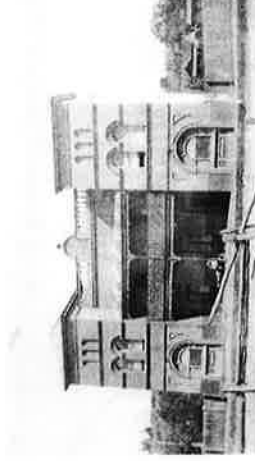
The following photographs have recently been donated to the Society:



The “turning of the first sod” for the TB Settlement at Picton Lakes Village, Couridjah – donated by Patricia Cleary



Drummond Hotel, corner of Argyle Street and Barkers Lodge Road, Picton c. 1880 – donated by member Suzanne MacDougall



The Great Southern Hotel, Menangle Street, Picton, c. 1922. Donated by Helen Butler

## WOLLONDILLY PIONEERS' INDEX

In 1996, Camden Family History Society initiated a project to document the pioneer settlers in Camden. This resulted in the publication of the book "Pioneers of Camden" which is available in local museums and libraries and has been a wonderful resource for people researching their family history.

The success of this project has inspired The Oaks Historical Society to offer the same service for Wollondilly pioneer families. We encourage all residents of Wollondilly to request a Register Form from The Oaks Historical Society, PO Box 16, The Oaks 2570, or pick one up from the museum at the Wollondilly Heritage Centre, Edward Street, The Oaks or ring the museum on 46571796.

Information required relates to people born before 1920 and one form for each family is required. So if you were born before 1920, or your parents or grandparents or great-grandparents were born in Wollondilly, we would love to hear from you! For more information please ring our Secretary, Vivian Allen on 46571189 or our family History officer, Cynthia Collison on 46772720.

- Forms can be collected from our Research Room at the Wollondilly Library, Picton during the Society's opening hours.

following week that the water receded. In the meantime the newly planted crops of wheat were destroyed and soil washed away.

Winter set in, the ground was cold and sodden, and many people had influenza when the rain, driven by a sharp south-east wind, began in earnest late July. After the May floods, when so much water had come from the Razorback, a water channel was cut from the centre of the town to the creek. The builders intended that this drain would carry surplus water from the hills but it was poorly designed and executed. For Patrick Mulloy, the postmaster who ran the post office from his store near the creek, the new channel was a disaster. It almost surrounded the building and water rose two feet above the shop floor.

The bridge had not been replaced and there was much interest as to whom the contract would be awarded. The jocular tone of the *Empire* correspondent countered the gloom with "another flood will save the contractor much trouble". The new bridge was commenced later in the year and fortunately when the next flood hit the town during late November, it had not been sufficiently advanced into the stream for the pressure of the water to damage it. Also, the contractors suspecting the worst, had securely tied the timbers and working gear.

On the Thursday night, 17th November, the rain come with fearful violence and those inhabitants living in the low-lying areas quit their homes. Some of these people had moved four or five times during 1860. The town was covered with a sheet of water and the post office was again flooded. It would appear that the water channel remained. The small bridge on the southern side of Razorback was washed away and desperate farmers saw not only their recently planted crops destroyed, but there was evidence of rust in wheat. And of course, there was no mail as well as frequent telegraph delays.

During this period of settlement, Picton was isolated not only geographically with the hills surrounding the tiny village, but the roads were so bad any heavy rain, and especially floods, cut the deplorable roads that were endemic in the colony. By the time that carts or the mail coach could get through, the water that had devastated Picton had been drained into the Nepean River and thus there was minimal evidence of what had occurred. This was a

different view of the flooding on the Hawkesbury or at Goulburn that were not only major food producers for Sydney, but the nature of the land ensured that low lying areas retained water for long after the main body had passed into the river systems. For Picton, it was bad enough being cut off from what was happening elsewhere in places that were also experiencing severe flooding, but as many people were migrants looking forward to news from home when a ship landed in Sydney, this isolation was particularly distressful.

Looking back in December at the year 1860, the people of Picton had indeed thought that the constant heavy rain was a prelude to the end. The weather, far from agreeable with its fierce extremes, at least held off the heavy rain that was in other districts. The harvest was poor. Unfortunately, hopes for the coming year were dashed with more rain and floods and to top it all off, the year 1862 was a drought. This was too much for many people who left the district owing money and debts that they had no way of paying. Patrick Mulloy, the postmaster, loaned money and the inability of his debtors to pay him, as well as the damages from the floods to his own farm, resulted in his financial ruin and he left the district in 1865.

In 1963, Picton, with much of New South Wales and Queensland suffered extensive flooding. Meteorologists checked written accounts and the meagre records of 1860 and came to the conclusion that every hundred years there could be heavier flooding than normally was the case. Thus, 1860 became the yardstick to what has become the 'hundred year flood mark'.

#### References

The Sydney Morning Herald 1860  
The Empire 1860  
NSW Postal Archives

## BITS AND PIECES

Central Coast Family History Society Inc. will host this years NSW & ACT Association of Family History Societies Inc State Conference from 18 September to 21 September 2003. Some members have expressed an interest in attending and we have booked a trading table to sell our publications. Any members interested in attending please contact Gail.

The website for Central Coast Family History Society Inc. is:  
<http://www.centralcoastfhs.org.au>

The Society of Australian Genealogists will present its annual SHOWCASE on Friday 30 and Saturday 31 May 2003, 10 am – 4 pm.

Advance tickets on sale from 1 April – \$10.00 (1 day) or \$15.00 (2 days)  
Or: Purchase at the door: \$15.00 per day.

- Help with Australian and Overseas research
- Lectures – many topics – over two days
- New and Secondhand book sales, charts etc.
- Displays and Stalls by numerous Government and Commercial Organisations
- Scrapbooking
- Special Interest Groups – British in India, German, London and Home Counties, Iris, Scottish and more.
- Sausage sizzle, coffee and cakes.

Society of Australian Genealogists  
120 Kent Street, Sydney: Tel: 02 92473953  
[www.sag.org.au](http://www.sag.org.au)

Scottish House have now opened a Scottish Cultural Centre which includes a reference/research library. The Centre is located at 25 Edgeworth David Avenue, Hornsby. Opening hours are Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday between 10 am and 3 pm.

Tel: 9477 4619 – email: [scottishhouse@sydney.net](mailto:scottishhouse@sydney.net)

married Larry Schaefer.

About four kilometres past O'Brien's property a rough walking track took you to Pheasants Nest weir. Five or six soldiers of the Citizens Military Force were stationed there to guard the water supply from contamination from enemy forces. My older sister and brothers often walked to the weir to play cards with the soldiers.

Wild flowers such as flannel flowers, bright red Christmas bush, 'bacon & eggs' and bush orchids flourished as well as many wallabies, whip-birds, satin-birds and all the usual bush birds in the years I lived in Pheasants Nest.

The population of Pheasants Nest in those years consisted of twenty-two adults, seven school age children, three little ones and eight young adults. The term teenager was unknown in Australia then. Of the adults three men worked away all week.

Bob and Alex Davis joined the army. They later married and lived in Bargo. As I mentioned Arthur Knox enlisted and went 'missing in action'.

There was no power or town water in Pheasants Nest. No postman or school bus. Edie Davis, Kevin and I had Blackfriars Correspondence Lessons posted monthly when we had time.

Petrol and food were rationed. Mum swapped our own butter coupons for tobacco coupons for my father to neighbours who didn't smoke

After our chores were done Kevin and I roamed the creeks and gullies around the farm. I've always felt privileged to have had such a secure and peaceful childhood.

### The Governor and the Servant Girl

William Chalker (Coromandel 1802) and Elizabeth Shackel (Speke 1808) had a son Edward born 1809. Edward married Mary McGlynn in 1835. Mary the daughter of Michael McLane alias Michael McGlin (Rolla 1803) had previously been married to a Michael Gill and had a daughter Mary Ann who was born in 1831. Mary however was raised in the family of Edward and Mary Chalker (the surname changed in this branch of the family from Chalker to Chalker).

In 1850 Sir Charles Augustus Fitzroy visited the Mittagong area and stayed in one of Edward Chalker's hotels - The Surveyor General at Berrima. Sir Charles was in the area to open the first iron-smelters in Australia. It just so happens that Mary Ann was working at the same hotel that the Governor was staying at.

Young Mary gave birth to a son on 9 November 1850, the child being baptised on 30 March 1851.

The following is an extract from the Sunday Mirror of 16 September 1962, page 30:

Among the servants at the Surveyor General Inn at Berrima was pretty young Miss Chalker, daughter of Ned Chalker, formerly a prize fighter much admired by the sporting fancy of Sydney. Some months later Ned Chalker came to Sydney to confer with solicitor William Thurlow. His daughter, he said, was about to become a mother - and the man responsible was His Excellency Sir Charles Fitzroy.

Dr Lang (The Rev John Dunmore Lang, prominent Presbyterian minister of the day) later wrote sardonically, "As other members of the Fitzroy household also stayed at Berrima, there might be some doubt as to which of the exemplary family the paternity might be assigned."

Chalker insisted that the Governor himself was the girl's lover. Thurlow visited Government House to discuss the delicate situation and according to common report, came away with 200 pounds as consolation for the aggrieved father.

Other articles on Sir Charles and his roving eye can be found in the Daily Mirror of 31 March 1998, p. 90 and the Sunday Telegraph of 6 September 1981, p. 126.

## PHEASANTS NEST

Written by Clare Bell

Pheasants Nest in the decade between 1937 and 1947 was a locality roughly bounded by the Potholes Level Crossing on the Bargo River east of Tahmoor, to the Pheasants Nest Weir near Wilton on the South Coast side of the Nepean River.

My younger brother Kevin and I were taught to swim at the Potholes by our father Denis John Dwyer (John) during the summer of 1938. He placed three big logs in a U shape with the blank side being the bank of the river where the little kids walked into the water. We didn't venture out of this space until we could dog paddle really well, and the big kids could only splash us from outside of this area. While one small child was being coached in the art of swimming the others held onto a log and kicked vigorously.

My older brothers Ambrose and Francis tied a heavy rope to a stout tree overhanging the river. Any one who could swim and was game used to do 'bombs' off this rope into a deep swimming hole away from the little kids area.

After a flood the men and big boys waded all the spots where branches or other debris had lodged and removed them. If this was not feasible they roped that portion of the water off until the next flood swept it all away. We didn't like sandbanks to move as they were such fun to play on.

Many family picnics took place on the sandy eastern shore of the river under the shade of huge eucalyptus and smaller sally-wattle and she-oak trees. Some folk drove a horse and sulky while others rode pushbikes or walked. We could always get clean water upstream from the swimming area to boil the billy.

On the Tahmoor side of the crossing the men constructed a fireplace and nature provided a flat rock table for us.

If the adults didn't want to get their feet wet they could use the four-plank footbridge. The few people who had cars washed them in the running water at the crossing every few months. There was only rain-

opposite side of the road to Davis's place. She had darkest brown eyes and hair on her face and always dressed in black from head to toe. She walked to Tahmoor every fortnight to get her war pension. If Kevin and I did not have to hurry home Mrs. Eather would take us into her sitting room and show us oval framed pictures of her lost loved ones.

When we took messages to her she would sit us down at her kitchen table covered with newspaper and give us tea with condensed milk. A real treat for us as we only had cows milk at home! Mrs. Eather grew bright red Canna lilies right around her square front garden with parsley in between.

We were the only family to have a telephone in Pheasants Nest so urgent messages to neighbours were written out carefully by Mum in her beautiful copperplate writing for Kevin and I to deliver. Mum always wrote on the envelope '*per favour Clare and Kevin Dwyer*' which made us feel very important. My father himself took drastic messages such as when Mr. Saddesthaite died.

Knox's got a party line a year or so later. Their call was one long ring followed by two short rings. Ours was two shorts and a long. That was the only time Mum answered the phone.

A rough track continued on over a small flat creek about three kilometres to the next house belonging to the Trode family. On the way a tall black stump sprouted red leaves every spring which gave Kevin and I a fright, especially when a wallaby leapt out and bounded away, his tail thumping as he jumped. We imagined it was a red headed bushranger.

A huge trellis of wisteria climbed along Troodes verandah. They were very religious, said Grace before and after meals and they didn't eat meat. The girls had long wavy hair.

Lyn and Larry Schaefer had a lead-light window in their kitchen opposite Troodes property. The glass glowed like jewels. I had never seen anything so colourful. Larry carted charcoal in his old Buick car. They had no children.

The last family in Pheasants Nest in that decade were the O'Brien's. Mr. O'Brien was deaf and played the fiddle beautifully. His wife died and he remarried. Mick, Lyle, Lyn and Colleen were his adult children. Lyn



rump plus earmark. Mum 's brand for her cattle was an X and two dots on the nearside shoulder. We grew corn, saccaline and oats for the Fresh Food and Ice Company Dairy Farm at Picton. Dad killed a sheep every week for home and a pig at Christmas time.

My older brothers, Ambrose and Frank trapped rabbits to supplement the pig feed and sold the skins. We ate young rabbits twice a week at least. We reared poddy calves to sell at Camden Saleyards.

During droughts when the poor ewes starved and could not suckle their newborn lambs we reared the lambs on cows milk. Even when the lambs grew and were put out to mingle with the flock they still came to me when I called.

The Ford family, Les and Madge, the parents, and young Les, Madge and Tony lived in what we called the Fords Paddock in a bark house lined with hessian and pasted with newspapers. It was always tidy.

Rabbits ate their garden. Mum delivered Tony, the youngest baby, when the bush nurse got lost one stormy night. Mr Ford made his living chopping baker's wood on our property.

Through the war my father, big brother Ambrose and Dick Love all cut bakers wood for 'the war effort'. Dick lived in a tent in Grahams Bush with Harold, his son, about Kevin's age.

Mackin Brothers carted two truckloads of wood to Sydney Showground from Narringa five days a week for years, while the soldiers were stationed there.

About a mile further on lived Mr. And Mrs. Davis, Teddy, Bob, Alex and Edie. They had a fenced in yard around the house with mint growing near the tank stand. Mrs. Davis cooked delicious cakes and biscuits. Mr. (Tiger) Davis, worked at Warragamba Dam through the week and came home at weekends.

Over a rise past the Davis' but not on the road, George and Christy Vock lived. They worked at Warragamba also.

A dear old widow lady Mrs. Eather, who lost her husband and son in the First World War had a house with a separate kitchen on the

water in Pheasants Nest in those days.

As we grew up we were allowed to ride our stock horses or pushbikes to the river to cool off. The boys sometimes camped in a large cave downstream from the crossing, burning wallaby droppings to ward off mosquitoes.

About a kilometre south of the crossing, Dogtrap Bridge spanned Dogtrap Creek, a small tributary of Bargo River. It was the only plank bridge in the district. Rockford Road from the Tahmoor side of Pheasants Nest and Arina Road from Bargo met at the bridge although no signposts marked the spot.

The first dwelling, 'Sugarloaf' was left of Rockford Road about five kilometres further on at the end of a lane, a neat weatherboard house with a wide veranda. Mr. and Mrs Tommy Gore ran sheep on about four hundred acres of land. There were no children and no garden. They used powdered milk in their tea and Mrs. Gore baked lovely crisp Anzac Biscuits. Foxes slaughtered their chooks once and they did not replace them.

To the left side of the house stood a giant hill with a huge scar high along the side where silica used to be mined. Kevin and I often climbed it, finding interesting mineral looking stones there.

At the back of the hill was a huge chasm, the junction of the Nepean and Bargo Rivers. It was very rugged country indeed.

Opposite Mr. Gore's gate on the right hand side of the road but invisible through the trees was a poultry farm owned by Mr Gerald Turlton and his sister Miss Turlton. Their spacious house had narrow garden beds running the length of the front verandah with standard roses set at metre intervals. In drought time they pumped water for the chooks from Eliza Creek near their southern boundary.

Three Italian prisoners of war lived and worked for Turlton's through the war. They wore orange overalls. Kevin and I were scared of them although all they ever did was to come over to the fence and try to talk to us as we rode our bikes along the road.

Rockford Road curved along downhill to the Eliza Creek Bridge, a very

rough log structure with cobwebs festooned underneath. It shook alarmingly when you were looking for tadpoles in the water below.

An old man, Mr. Saddlethwaite, who lived alone at the end of Lawson Road cut his throat and died at that bridge. It was something to do with the war, poor man. The horses would not cross that bridge for years. Dad told us they could smell the blood. We never played under the bridge again.

The Knox's home was next, on the corner of Lawson Rd. and Rockford Rd. It was a small weatherboard house with three little dark rooms and a sleep out for Bruce. The washhouse and bathroom were separate from the house.

Bruce and his mother Mrs. Cecelia Knox, showed us around the garden each time we visited them. The ground was rough and humpy, however the two huge Empress of Russia red camellia trees were a delight in winter.

Bruce grew pumpkins and artichokes. The grape trellis was loaded with Isabella grapes.

Every Tuesday Bruce strapped a sugar-bag on his back and rode his push-bike to Tahmoor to get their groceries. They purchased a car years later.

Bruce and his mother ran a poultry farm with the help of Bruce's younger brother Arthur until he enlisted in the army. He served as a stretcher-bearer in New Guinea. Sadly he was later listed as missing-in-action.

Mum and I sometimes walked to Knox's on a cool Sunday evening when Bruce would show me the day old chickens in the brooder-house.

Mum often took a dozen scones for afternoon tea and Mrs. Knox cooked a delicious light Peach Blossom cake. We usually sat under the grape arbour for tea. Bruce walked us as far as the rough log bridge spanning the Dry Creek between our farms after each visit.

About three kilometres from Knox's was our farm 'Narringa' aboriginal for 'little creek'.

In late 1937 my parents purchased 'Narringa' a Federation style home, built in 1900 of locally made brick. The property of 1,781 acres, was divided into 250 acre paddocks with only the house-paddock, sheep and cattle yards and feed-lots etc. being smaller.

Our home had a long hallway with rooms opening off each side; a fireplace in each room with tiled surrounds and marble mantelpiece. A veranda ran halfway front and side with a beautiful wrought iron frieze ornamenting the top.

The homestead had double wooden gates and a driveway up each side right to the back. A huge pure white camellia tree grew in a centre garden bed surrounded by narrow lawns just the right width for summer-sauntering down to the front gate.

On the left hand side of the gates my father built a swing and a horizontal bar where he and we children could do acrobatics. My brothers and I built a summer-house of four solid corner-posts, thin paper-bark saplings at foot intervals, laced with small branches from the paper-barks. We made seats from empty wooden fencing-wire spools with sawn timber nailed across. It was a lovely cool place to be during summer.

In our sitting room was a beautiful clock with a shining pendulum which chimed on the hour, then every fifteen minutes. My father opened it's glass door carefully and wound it every eight days with a key he kept in the floor of the clock

We were proud of our AWA radio, powered by two dry batteries and a wet battery which had to be taken to the garage in Bargo to be charged when it went flat. During the war years the wireless was used mainly to hear news of the war, 'The Country Hour' and 'Dad and Dave'

Our 'Hallstrom Iceball' the forerunner of the 'Silent Knight Refrigerator' was run by kerosene. The wicks of two small round tanks were lit every night under a bulky round water and ammonia filled drum. It had a smaller steel ball connected to a pipe running inside the enamel lined chest where food was kept cool. It was a treat to have cold milk and un-runny jelly!

My father ran merino sheep. His brand was a D in a half circle on the