



Merewether Historical Society

"A society aimed at recording memories of the past for the benefit of the next generation."

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The Chronicle

December 2021

Meetings: Next meeting is **February 10, 10 15** for morning tea with meeting to begin at 10.30. Venue is the Merewether Bowling Club and we shall be having lunch afterward so hope you can join us.

Guest Speaker: Wal Walker will relate the very interesting history of how D'Arcy Wentworth and Jane Austen had a connection with early Newcastle. Not to be missed!

Sadly, another of our long-time members passed away on 26 November. Vale Bob Gawthrop, our thoughts are with your family.

Fees for 2021/22 are now overdue. Cost is \$20 single and \$30 for family. Thank you to those members who have already paid.

Bus Trips: A flyer with planned bus trips for 2022 will be available at the Christmas lunch and February meeting, but please keep the following dates free: 15 March, 17 May, 19 July and 18 October.



Christmas Lunch: We have a 'full house' for our lunch on 14 December, it will be so good to celebrate together again and put the past few months of uncertainty behind us!

December Birthday Greetings and best wishes to Robyn Single, and of course those who are also celebrating this month that I am unaware of.



Merewether Telephone Exchange: Thanks to Dennis Hinchliffe for this interesting snippet. The Exchange, at 125 Ridge St, was

opened on 26 September 1953. In order to telephone anyone in Merewether your call went through to the exchange and then onto Hamilton Exchange which finally connected you to the number you wanted. A machine at Hamilton recorded the call and every hour, all calls made were automatically sent to Melbourne. This is where the charges were added to the callers account.



The Merewether site was sold for just under \$1,000,000 in 2018 and was demolished in late August this year. The Hamilton Exchange actually had a genuine Earl working there, he inherited the title but no lands or money. While he was on holidays his workmates had his title etched onto his office door. Another office was inscribed with 'The Vatican' but no reason for this is available.

I can still recall telephone numbers beginning with MA (now 61 Hamilton) MW (now 67 Mayfield) and MF (now 63 Merewether) and the old black dial phones – doesn't seem like that long ago!!



Christmas Traditions in Australia: A Summer Celebration

Perhaps the best thing about Christmas in Australia is that it is in the middle of summer and most of the time, you can enjoy the holiday outdoors. This is far different from our European relatives and friends who are used to snowflakes, not so pretty slush and bitterly cold weather.

We do however share many traditions, albeit with our own unique flavour. Many families put up Christmas trees, real or artificial, while also decorating with native plants, such as Christmas Bush or Christmas Bells.

Many towns and cities have a traditional Christmas tree in a public area. One of the most beautiful public trees is in the Queen Victoria Building in Sydney, decorated with over 144,000 Swarovski crystals and 60,000 sparkling lights.

Carols by Candlelight, and carollers visiting neighbourhood houses are other popular traditions we share but with some uniquely Australian themed carols such as Rolf Harris' Six White Boomers, Christmas in Australia, Christmas Where the Gum Trees Grow and Aussie Twelve Days of Christmas just a few of them.

Our Christmas lunches and dinners too share similarities with our British forebears. Turkey, ham, stuffing, potatoes, gravy, mince tarts, Christmas pudding, custard and hard sauce are almost always on the menu. But in Australia supplemented by beautiful seafood and fresh salads and perhaps a pavlova or trifle.



Many Australians have also developed a more modern tradition of having a barbeque

in the backyard or at the beach. Cold picnics in the park are also common.



However you are planning to celebrate Christmas this year I wish you all a truly peaceful festive season, spent with friends and family, with warm memories of loved ones who are absent. Best wishes for a Christmas full of fun and love and a happy, healthy new year.



Point to Ponder: "Christmas is the season when you buy this year's gifts with next year's money" Author unknown.

COMMITTEE FOR 2020/2021

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