



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

January 2023

Sadly I have to advise of the death of one of our members. Pamela Burns passed away in early December following a period of ill health.

Meetings: Next meeting will be held at Merewether Bowling Club Caldwell St on **Tuesday 14 February**, 10.30 for a 10.45 start. Hope to see you there. Changes to our Constitution will be voted on, as per details in the December Chronicle

Guest Speaker Greg Nelmes will talk on the History the South Newcastle Hockey Club

Birthday Wishes Many happy returns to Jan Graham, Julia Harrison, Judy Henry and Brian Roach as well as all our other members who celebrate in January.

Bus Trip 23 members and friends enjoyed several days away visiting Cowra and from the anecdotes I've heard and photos seen many happy memories were made. Perhaps the highlight for many was when the coach became a 'super car' and drove on the Mt Panorama Circuit at Bathurst!



The township of "Coura Rocks" had its beginnings in 1844. Around 1847, the township site became known as Cowra, and in 1849, was proclaimed a village.

In the 1850s many gold prospectors passed through headed for gold fields at Lambing Flat (Young) and Grenfell. The first school was established in 1857. The town water

supply was established in 1909, the gasworks in 1912 and town supplied electricity was introduced in 1924. From 1904 to 1966 the Cowra Experiment Farm was in operation, experimenting with wheat and with fallow crops.



Cowra hosts an annual Festival of International Understanding, featuring a parade, a fireworks display, balloons for the children and events showcasing a particular foreign culture.



During World War II, Cowra was the site of a prisoner of war (POW) camp. Most of the detainees were captured Japanese and Italian military personnel. However, in July 1942, Indonesian political prisoners from the Dutch Tanahmerah prison on the Digul river, in West Papua, were transported as "prisoners-of-war" to the Cowra prison camp. The Indonesian prisoners arrived in mid-1942 and were released on 7 December 1943.



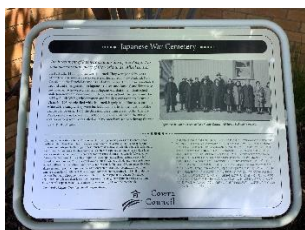
On 5 August 1944, at least 545 Japanese POWs attempted a mass breakout from the camp. Simultaneously, other Japanese prisoners committed suicide, or were killed by their countrymen, inside the camp.

The actions of the POWs in storming machine gun posts, armed only with improvised weapons, showed what Prime Minister John Curtin described as a "suicidal disregard of life".

During the breakout and subsequent recapture of POWs, four Australian guards and 231 Japanese died, and 108 prisoners were wounded. The dead Japanese were buried in Cowra in the specially created Japanese War Cemetery. This is the only such cemetery in Australia, and also holds some of the dead from the World War II air raids on Darwin.



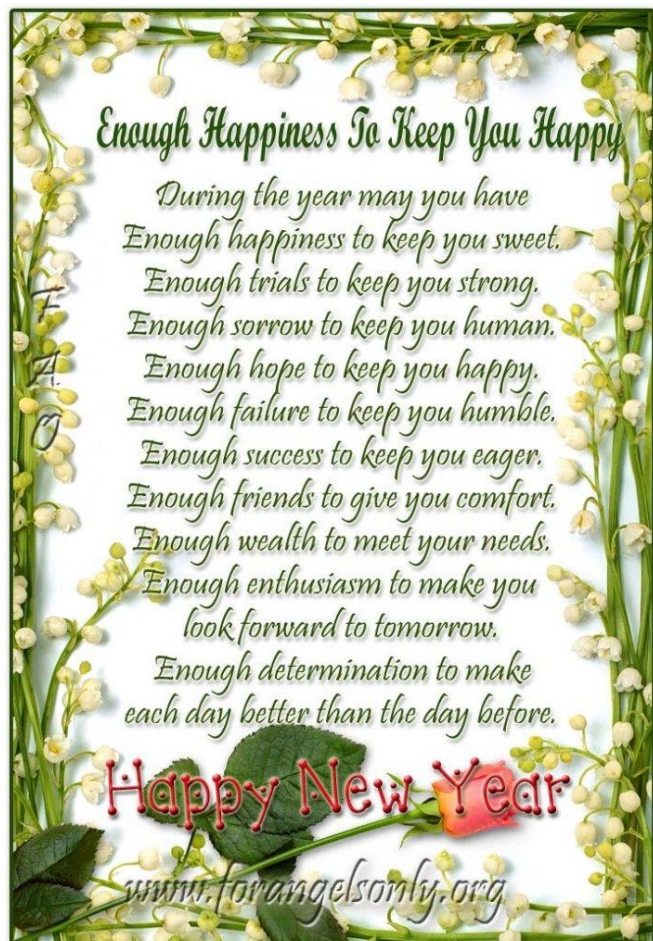
An Avenue of Honour also commemorates those who died in World War I. There is an annual ceremony to commemorate the breakout, involving local school students, council members, local dignitaries and guest Japanese visitors.



Our Christmas lunch was well attended and all present enjoyed a thoroughly wonderful few hours. Food was great, company enjoyable and the entertainment excellent.



Well we have said goodbye to 2022 and 2023 promises a whole new chapter. One that hopefully will finally see those in power throughout the world see some common sense, and start working together to fix the many issues facing our planet.



Looking forward to seeing you all again in 2023 and hoping it brings health, happiness and prosperity

2022/23 Committee:

- President: Geoff Wright
- Vice President: Dennis Hinchliffe
- Secretary: Sue Kenny
- Asst Secretary: Denise Wright
- Treasurer: Greg Struck
- Asst Treasurer: Monica Jordon
- Committee: Alison Chapman
Iain Kelso
Jan Welsman
Judy Henry
- Hon. Solicitor: Nicholas Dan

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