Merewether Historical Society

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

Email: secretary@merewetherhistorical.com Website: www.merewetherhistoricalsociety.com

The Chronicle

October 2026

The next Meeting will be held on Tuesday 10th November
Guest Speaker For November has changed to

John Mayo OAM – "Nine WW I locals you've probably not heard of!"

December 8th meeting : Christmas party luncheon - see details below.

Meeting: Next meeting, Merewether Bowling Club, Caldwell St. on Tuesday **10th November** at 10:45. Club opens at 10:30. Complimentary tea, coffee and nibbles are available.
NO Lunch - the restaurant is NOT open on Tuesdays any more.

A tour of the Newcastle Art Gallery (FREE).
The November meeting will have sign up sheets for Dates, Times and Groups.

Please remember to use our NEW suggestion box.
We have paper and pens next to the suggestion box on the table at the back of the meeting.
Alternatively you can write your note at home and just drop it in the box.

Any thoughts?
* Improvements or changes to meetings, or how the society is run,
* Ideas about how to commemorate our 25th anniversary in April next year,
* Excursion suggestions, comments…
* Venue alternatives or comments about the current one,
* Anything else????

Richard Jones the guest speaker at our October meeting was a superb representative for the Westpac Rescue Helicopter organisation.
Richard, a local boy, born and bred locally [he wouldn't live west of Darby Street] started with a brief summary of his employment history.
The highlight of his working life, before he became involved with what is now known as the **Westpac Rescue Helicopter service,** (WHRS) was owning a local fruit shop business.

Richard has now been working for the WRHS for 31 years.
The WHRS itself had its 50th birthday last year!
Initially (1973-1975) the whole organisation was Non-Profit, funded solely by private donations and run by volunteers.
The original Bell C47 type helicopter was very similar to the helicopters in the MASH TV program and was only rented in the summer. It had a single engine, could only carry patients externally for a very short distance and had to land to pick up patients.



For rescues in the ocean it had a fixed rope to which a rescue crewman at the bottom who had to attach the patient so both could be lifted to the beach!
All personnel, except the pilot, were Surf club volunteers. No doctors or nurses were involved.

In 1975 Westpac Bank became the first corporate sponsor. But there was still NO government funding. A new more capable helicopter was leased. Still single engine, still staffed mostly by volunteers but now had a all year fixed base at Marathon Stadium as it was then known. Coal mining unions up the hunter valley and insurance



companies started to donate because they could see value. Helicopters being able to reach injured workers quickly and get them to medical care within the proverbial “golden hour” when first-class treatment in hospitals by specialists makes all the difference to patient outcomes. These helicopters were equipped with a winch for rescue and had enough power to accommodate one onboard medic and an internal stretcher.

By 1986 there was so much demand, and factual data - proving the value in helicopter-rescue patient outcomes, that the NSW State government actually started to regularly contribute to the financial upkeep of the WRHS.

To deal with this demand a second fixed base was opened in Tamworth.

Helicopter size, carrying-capacity and range increased over the next 3 decades. The number of helicopters increased, the type of helicopter changed, the number of engines in the helicopters increased to two, and of course so did the need for money to finance this growth.

The financing of the WRHS was 80% private and 20% public until 2017 when it switched to 80% Public and 20% private.

The third fixed base for helicopter operations in Northern NSW is in Lismore.

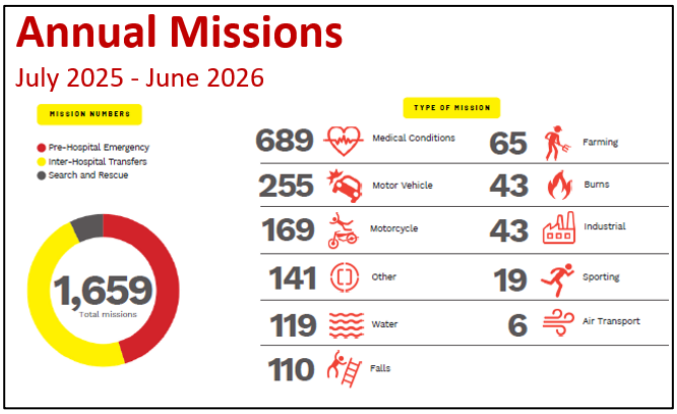
Up until today there have been 8 different types of helicopters.



TODAY the AW139s surpass all other medium twin-engine helicopters in operational range, performance and power. It was designed to take oil workers to and from offshore oil rigs.

Its range carrying capacity and ability to operate in almost all weather conditions make it a superb vehicle for getting to injured patients fast.

There are 3 of these aircraft in the fleet



now. They cost $22million each and each have a medical fit-out costing $3 million. If the $5million extension of the government contract goes through next month they will lease a 4th helicopter.

Helicopter Critical Care Medical Teams can provide complex treatment and stabilization of patients on the scene prior to transport, and continuing in flight on the way to the most appropriate emergency department. They have a doctor and emergency paramedic on board.and have room for two stretchers.

These services deserve our support.

Richard did Not ask for any donations directly but I believe the **Westpac Rescue Helicopter service** deserves our financially support.

The contact For Further Information is

Danny Eather

danny.eather@rescuehelicopter.com.au



MHS CANBERRA TRIP

On Monday 19th October 38 M H S members and guests set off south down the Motorway on our Annual Adventure.

First stop was Bowral in the Southern Highlands for lunch in the park and to view the last of the tulip beds. We then continue our coach journey through the Southern Highlands area and onto Canberra to settle in at the Garden City Motel, our home for the next 4 nights.

Tuesday was a big day commencing with a coach tour and interesting commentary on the Embassy district then off to the National Museum of Australia for a guided tour of Australia's past. After lunch, we visited Parliament House, although neither house was sitting it was a very interesting to see and hear the stories of how Australia's Parliament evolved over time. The next site we visited was the Australian War Memorial where we were treated to a brief guided tour of the site then attended a memorial service conducted each afternoon at 4.30pm by a Defence Force personal to close off the day.



Then on Wednesday morning, after an early start, we were on our way to Batemans Bay. Unfortunately, a hiccup occurred with our planned lunch/boat trip there. Luckily our very experienced coach driver hastily organised a delicious lunch at the Batemans Bay Boatshed then a two-hour driver to Jervis Bay where we enjoyed a boat trip around the vast Jervis Bay along with excellent commentary. Back on the coach to Canberra where we were treated to a great meal at the Robbie Burns Club Buffet with an extensive range of dishes to round off our day.

Thursday commenced with an early visit to the old Parliament House. This was a was a very interesting site with numerous displays of former years historical events and incidents. Following that was the National Gallery of Australia which holds more than 166,000 art works. Then a trip up the mountain to the National Arboretum which overlooks the Canberra district. At this spectacular location is a superb display of Bonsai and Penjing Collection.

We then travel to Cockington Green at Gold Creek for lunch and to inspect the vast display of miniature buildings of the world, a very interesting place. Lastly we headed to the Australian Mint where we enjoyed a guided tour through the Mint's museum and later viewed the production of Australia's coins.

Our last day of the tour, Friday, we visited Kings Park where we were treated to a detailed display and commentary as to the formation of Parliament and the Canberra district. We are then taken to the Governor General's residence and given a tour of the formal and entertaining areas of the residence. A spectacular moment. At the completion of this tour we left Canberra to travel to Goulburn for lunch and then home.

Art Gallery tour organising Merewether Historical Society November 2026

The Art Gallery is open from 10:00am to 4:00pm, Tuesday to Sunday.
Web address: https://newcastleartgallery.nsw.gov.au Phone: 02 4974 5100

Free Free tours, all open to the general public, with the Theme "Iconic and Unexpected" are held three times a week on: Wednesday at 12 noon, Saturdays at 11am, Sundays at 11am. Just turn up on time and join the tour group.

Paid Groups (of More than 10) may organise a private tour of the gallery.
These tours cost $5.00 per person. Paid when you sign up. Paid tours start at 10:30 or 12:30
DATES - I'm suggesting: Thursday 19th November, Tuesday 24 November, and Thursday 26 November . All at 10:30am.
You do not have to be a member of MHS to join the tour. Friends welcome.
There are sign up sheets for those who would like this **paid option** at the desks as you leave the November meeting.

REMEMBER 10 paying people is the minimum. Money back if 10 persons is not reached.

I will email MEMBERS as to whether each private tour date is viable (more than 10 paid participants).

The Café at the Art Gallery, "Hilliers Café" does NOT take bookings.

MEREWETHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY

CHRISTMAS LUNCH

AT
MEREWETHER BOWLING CLUB, CALDWELL ST, MEREWETHER
TUESDAY 8TH DECEMBER 2026
11:30 for 12:15

COMPLIMENTARY GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE or DRINK ON ARRIVAL



2 COURSE CHRISTMAS LUNCH
MAIN COURSE - BAKED DINNER
DESSERT - ALTERNATE SERVING
TEA AND COFFEE



COST $50 PER PERSON (same as last year)
COMPLIMENTARY GLASS OF CHAMPAGNE/DRINK ON ARRIVAL
Christmas trivia – Table groups
LUCKY SEAT prize and Table prize from Trivia.

PAYMENT BY END OF NOVEMBER 2024
DIRECT DEPOSIT BSB 650-000 A/C 966001108
Please include your Name in the deposit so we know who's paid.

PLEASE ADVISE OF ANY SPECIAL DIETARY REQUIREMENTS



CONTACT
DENISE WRIGHT - 0413892214
or
MONICA JORDAN - 0419496988



MEMBERS AND FRIENDS WELCOME

The Committee of the Merewether Historical Society
would like to wish one and all a very happy Christmas
and all the best for 2027
with sincere thanks for your support throughout 2026.

