



**UPPER HUNTER MUSEUM of RURAL LIFE Inc**

P.O. Box 140. Aberdeen, NSW, 2336.

## **NEWSLETTER**

July 2016

Aberdeen recently held its 17th Highland Games. The sun shone, the crowds arrived, there were bagpipes and caber tossing. People came dressed in their full Scottish garb. The committee should be very satisfied with the results of a well organized day.

The people of Aberdeen are still proud of their Scottish Heritage and love to be out and be seen enjoying the day and the sense of belonging that comes with the shared cultural tradition.

Aberdeen also has a rich Australian Rural Tradition. A small country town, one of many, but very special in many ways. The early settlers, be they convicts or rich 'gentry' all played a role in the foundation of the town. The rich grazing and the highway & railway headed north set Aberdeen in just the right place for the development of a meatworks that was to dominate the employment of the town for many years. We had a prosperous dairy industry, market gardens and now horse studs. The town was rich with schools, sports, racing and local industry. All this weaves a framework of place and belonging, memories and something to hang on to.

The Local Studies Group has a goal to collect and preserve the record of some of this rich history for the people of Aberdeen. If you have any old photos please let us know.

### Marching on a sunny day in Aberdeen



The committee of the UHMRL would also like to thank the Upper Hunter Shire Council for their generous contribution to our morning tea and movie in Seniors Week again this year.

### Next Luncheon & Movie Tuesday 9th August "Bran Nue Dae"



An Australian musical comedy  
Bookings Daphne 65438356 & Jan 65437150

Next meeting UHMRL –  
Wed, 24th August at 4 pm Aberdeen Library.  
New members & volunteers always welcome.  
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Next scanning afternoon for the Aberdeen Local  
Study Group - Friday, 26th August 2pm - 4.30pm  
at the Aberdeen Library.

Upper Hunter Museum of Rural Life Inc. raising funds to establish a Museum and Cultural Centre in Aberdeen.

[www.aberdeenmuseum.org.au](http://www.aberdeenmuseum.org.au)

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## Old Aberdeen.

### THE HECTIC DAYS OF SIXTY-FIVE YEARS SINCE.

WHEN THE HUNTER WAS UN-SPANNED.  
(By William Bridge in the "Scone Advocate.")

The Aberdeen of 1862 was quite a different place to the Aberdeen of 1927. Then the extreme end old Segenhoe, an estate, or rather principality, rich in historical data - now a prosperous township, with its future assured. Like many other settlements on the main northern route, and actually the jumping-off point of several of Australia's celebrated explorers, notably the great botanist, Allen Cunningham, who passed through in the late twenties of last century and re-victualled at Segenhoe, Aberdeen had more than a passing significance. The familiar pendant inn signs were to be observed, there was a lock-up, stores, a flour mill, and other places of business. But the fact that the Hunter River was still to be spanned by the ingenuity of man meant much for the township. The disastrous floods of the 'sixties claimed several victims, yet at the same time brought grist to the mills of the business members of the community. At such times, there was always a very much inflated population. Teams making to the North, then regarded as the Eldorado of the colony, were held up by the score, and until such time as the yellow waters receded, great was the conviviality, and the skittle boards and quoit pitching grounds of the old Australian Inn and Blue Bell Hotel, conducted by mine hosts John Cundy and Alexander Johnstone, junr., attracted crowds of the cosmopolitan order, and the hills as far - removed as "Jack Straw's" ridge, on the Rouchel road, resounded in keeping with the merriment and animation. The Australian Inn in later years changed its appellation to that of the more modernised title of Commercial Hotel, and the Blue Bell was a little later run by Luke Conray Halcomb, and like the first-named pile of good old mortar and bricks, stands to-day, but minus the swinging inscription which denoted its importance to the itinerant gentry. Cundy's hotel was a landmark on the Hunter when the writer was a mere stripling, and was very frequently the destination of a large proportion of the residents. One Amos Barry ladled out wine from a shanty near Dartmouth, and the only other drinking house, just recently closed, enjoyed the rather inappropriate name of The Tea-pot Inn, situated on the Rouchel road, four miles out. According to tradition, the licensee pressed into use in his bar the receptacle used for dispensing the more temperate beverage. Hence the appellation. From the Tea-pot Inn, or from Barry's, many a stirring race took place, the winning post always being mutually agreed upon as Cundy's. At such times, host Cundy, whose wife was,

incidentally, a sister of the great old scion of Segenhoe, Mr. Allan McDonald, generally had an entrant that could show a clean pair of

heels to the rest of the field, and great was the rejoicing, and profit, to the host of the Australian Inn following such contests. There was no Arbitration Court and associated awards, no Endowment Bill in the 'sixties, but drinks were threepence only, and so in ratio to the price, irrespective of the low scale of wages, the "cup that cheers" was lifted with an almost monotonous frequency. One "Brummy," a well-known frequenter of the inns, was one of the characters of the settlement. The coping-stone of one of his periods of relaxation was reached when he bartered his waistcoat for six-pence. The new owner donned it, and dredging one of the pockets, located a shilling! Poor "Brummy" accepted the situation unlike the usual run of philosophers. Writer witnessed this seasoned fellow put over an excellent joke on another occasion. The mail coach had just arrived, the box seat being jointly occupied by a uniformed man who had been worshipping Bacchus liberally if not wisely. Relieving him of his handcuffs and pinioning his wrists to the seat, the farcical feat was concluded by the practical joker consigning the key to an adjacent well. It was some time later before a "Colleague in Blue" could be located to release the still sub-conscious officer from his predicament. Many were the pranks played on the young bloods from the Upper Hunter who foregathered at the Australian Inn at such times when on their way to the Muswellbrook stock market, and more often than otherwise, the perpetrator was that native of the "Land of Heather," Allen McDonald. Some still on deck, recall his stentorian voice well before daylight on a frosty morning exhorting thorn to be off with their cattle, at the same time being in full possession of the knowledge that their I clothes had boon distributed throughout the premises overnight. One of the young colonials even had to ask of the landlady to be excused while he searched a far-removed room for his trousers! The carriers took pride in their teams in the days long since, and vied for pride of place and popularity with the mailmen - the kings of the highway. For the younger generation, however, the great event was the periodical coming of Lloyd's team of mules from far out Burburgate. It was the only team of the long-eared, braying quadrupeds on the track for many years, and on the run from Morpeth to the Northwest the animals stood up to their work admirably, paid handsomely, and wore the cynosure of all eyes on route.

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