

UPPER HUNTER MUSEUM of RURAL LIFE Inc
(& Aberdeen Local Studies Group)
P.O. Box 140. Aberdeen, NSW, 2336.

NEWSLETTER

November, 2016

LIBRARY DISPLAY CABINET

The much awaited display cabinet has arrived and The Aberdeen Local Studies Group have had the unit installed in the front room of the Aberdeen Library.

At present there is a sample display from the hundreds of images the group have housed in their collection. The display is accompanied by a collection of vintage cameras, old "tin" photographs and glass negatives that are on loan from a private collection.

The Upper Hunter Museum of Rural Life and The Aberdeen Local Studies Group are comprised of a very small group of volunteers that give of their time freely and without any thought of the personal time they allocate.

You may only see the members that co-ordinate the luncheons but there are many hours of preparation that occur before the event. This month I would like to recognise all the volunteers, especially those who work in the kitchen to bring the luncheon out on time and within budget.

Thank you to all the volunteers & supporters.

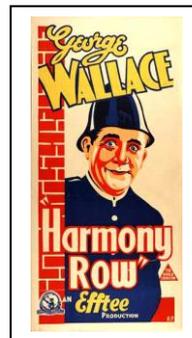
Next meeting UHMRL - AGM
Wednesday, 23rd November at 4 pm
Aberdeen Library .

All positions will be declared vacant.
New member & volunteers always welcome.

Last scanning afternoon for 2016
Aberdeen Local Study Group -
Friday, 25th November
2pm - 4.30pm at the Aberdeen Library.

Next Luncheon & Movie
Tuesday, 13th December, 2016

" HARMONY ROW "



Starring the
Aberdeen born
Vaudvillian,

**George
Wallace**

DVD, B/W
76 min, 1933 [G]

Bookings: Daphne 65438356

Continued from last month's newsletter:

Part 2 THE FARMING DAYS

Before and After the Advent of Machinery **By William Bridge**

The next type of machinery was a thresher introduced from America. It was a weird looking contraption, that is, compared with modern plant. It was operated by a pair of horses in a box, and was placed in a position on a slope. The horses walked on a sort of platform supporting rollers, which revolved opposite ways, thereby keeping the platform stationary. Only that it was constructed on a much larger scale, the apparatus must have reminded the old hands of the treadmill associated with the days of assignment. Like other machines brought on to the market within the next

decade or so, this one proved that the heavy initial cost paled into insignificance when the maintenance expenses had to be met with a recurring frequency. When in order, however, it proved the most invaluable adjunct to the machinery then in vogue. The next innovation in the same line was turned out by Cridleton and Lorn, a well-known firm carrying on business at Hinton, Maitland. Charles Lorne, one of the principals, carried on the business himself in later years. Spikes and rollers formed a conspicuous part of this machine, which was worked by bullocks and horses, or both, on the same principle of the old Californian pimp. To prevent the grain from going the same way as the straw, a unit known as a "shaker" was kept in motion right through the proceedings. Work at the plant called for men of cast-iron constitutions, for what with the heat from the sun, supplemented with that from the spread-cloth, the conditions were almost intolerable. Many a man →

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

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collapsed at his post. Bullocks were largely used in the ploughing season; the first horses seen in use in the Hunter Valley being used by recent arrivals from the Old Country. Some of these newcomers fairly revolutionised farming in the colony by introducing new methods. When wheat-growing commenced to be taken up more extensively on the Lower Hunter, extensive areas were broken in the vicinity of Cessnock, Pokolbin, Patrick Plains (Singleton), and Black Creek (now Branxton). As was only to be expected, flour mills next began to take their place, the first to be happened upon by the writer being one erected by a Mr. Lindsay, at Millfield, Wollombi. Others soon followed, one being at Wollombi, right adjacent the old township, owned by a Mr. Crothers, who in later years was stationmaster at Farley. Mr. Lindsay disposed of his concern to a Mr. George Smith, the last named re-entering the business and establishing a further place at Black Creek. Deteriorated walls still mark the spot of this old building. In subsequent years, the old miller in question acquired the beautiful Rothbury property. Mr. John Nott ran up a fine mill at the end of the Long Bridge, West Maitland, and probably it was Mr. Wolsterholme who did likewise in Elgin-street, West Maitland. John Street, Singleton, also boasted of a plant, which most likely had itself raised through, the instrumentality of Mr. Sawkins, father of Mr. Charles Sawkins, of Muswellbrook. That these concerns, without exception, were kept busy, only further illustrates the increasing demand for flour and the enhanced acreage worked. Even with the advent of these plants, many members of the farming community retained their private steel mills, turned by handle, and ground their own flour during the evening hours, and more often than otherwise following a long and strenuous day in the field. In the early 'sixties there was a great failure of the crops in consequence of an abnormally dry spell. The few men who held good samples of grain received up to and even over 24/- per bushel. A woman, a widow by the way, had a fairly large quantity of wheat slightly pinched. She was offered and refused 21/- per bushel. She held out for 24/- and with the grain still on her hands next season, she gladly accepted 12/- for it from the same buyer. Exactly 59 years ago a huge stack of maize, consigned from the Northern Rivers, was to be seen on the wharf at Newcastle. The best price realised for the consignment was 7d per bushel, and needless to say the growers lost big money on the grain. Fairly large quantities of grain were won in the Muswellbrook-Wyong district. Aberdeen possessed the nearest mill, that erected by Mr. Thomas P. M'Queen, of Segenhoe fame, and the old building is still to be viewed by the generation of to-day. It is worth recording that the old Muswellbrook mill was originally a tweed factory, built by a member of the Chivers family, several of whom were included in the business community of Scone perhaps ninety years ago. It was Joseph Chivers, relatives of whose family are still in the district, who conducted the St. Aubin's tavern—Mr. J. T. Vigers now lives on the exact site — when the Jew Boy gang of bushrangers visited Scone in 1841 and shot the young man Graham, an attendant of Mr. Thomas Dangar's store, situated on the Gundy road reserve where the machine sun is mounted to-day. The tweed factory at Muswellbrook proved a failure and was converted into a

mill. A treadmill was installed at the subject factory, and many a recalcitrant assigned servant was sentenced to varying periods on the contrivance, to which the lash was preferred by most of the unfortunates of the 'system.' The mill, worked for many years by a Mr. Thrum, has had a varied experience, for from the manufacturer's of cloth it was soon to be utilised for the grinding of wheat, only, many years later to be the centre of activities of a butter factory, and later again to be transformed into a freezing works. Wheat growing, then as now in many localities, was most uncertain, and the racing expression apropos of the hoisting of the numbers before collecting on the winner, was frequently exemplified in the cast of the old-time farmers. The late Mr. Martin Donohoe, a well-known inn-keeper, had a crop of wheat on the northern side of Muswellbrook that was the envy of the whole community. It comprised approximately 100 acres, and astute judges computed that it would average anything up to 40 bushels to the acre. Reapers were engaged on a Saturday afternoon, and they were on the spot ready for a start early on the following Monday morning. On the Saturday evening a terrific hailstorm penetrated the landscape and left barely a straw standing. All crops in the locality suffered similarly. At that distant time — it was a period when long distances were the rule rather than the exception — grain was brought from as far back as Coonabarabran to be treated at Muswellbrook. The old Aberdeen establishment was run under the direction of Mr. Wright, the progenitor of the favourably known Blandford district family of the same name. He was succeeded by Mr. John Morrison, who in turn was followed by the late Mr. John Boorer. The last-named miller, of whom many of those still in the flesh have had personal acquaintance, built the old mill in Scone, the machinery of which was dismantled a couple of months ago and transferred elsewhere. With the coming into being of the Scone plant, that in Aberdeen was forced into a lengthy period of idleness, but was at length converted into a cordial factory. It next came, into the possession of the late Hon. Jas. White, who disposed of it to the late Mr. Schroter, who re-opened it and carried on for a few years along the lines of business for which it was originally intended, and did remarkably well. Members of the family still hold the old place. Mr. Boorer was a most resourceful man, and in times of breakdowns, almost invariably effected repairs without any outside assistance. Many a missing cog of a wheel was replaced with one fashioned from timber, and served its purpose remarkably well. Mr. Boorer disposed of the concern to Mr. W. Little, and he in turn passed it over to the late Mr. Malcolm Campbell, of Muswellbrook, who was destined not only to run his business at Muswellbrook successfully, but to extend its ramifications to every quarter of the Upper Hunter. The new purchaser did not hesitate in installing new machinery, and the then engineer apprised the writer that the wooden cogs inserted in some of the wheels years before were still playing their part remarkably well. Mr. Boorer did not dissociate himself with the wheat business in its entirety when he left Scone, for he took up on the Wyong, farmed it, and erected a mill, the activities of which were only discontinued several years later when a fire completely destroyed it.