FROM THE NEWSLETTER EDITOR

This is the first of a series of e-newsletters to mark the 150th Anniversary of the Ben Hall Raid at Bathurst in 1863. The event saw some far-reaching effects that changed people’s lives and the Government of the day.

The anniversary will take the form of a weekend festival with numerous activities planned over three days. There will be a full programme of re-enactments, talks, tours, historic bushranging and colonial displays and memorabilia, book launches as well as a special dinner with guest speaker and bushranger historian Mr. Peter Smith with his talk entitled “Heroes to Villains.”

A sub-committee of the Bathurst District Historical Society has been meeting since May last year to organise this special weekend. This event marks the raid on Bathurst by the Ben Hall Gang and the effect it had not only on Bathurst but the Colony of New South Wales and the police system. The raid took place on the evening of Saturday 3rd October, 1863, sending many residents into a panic as the news was passed around.

It was during the time in history where bushrangers roamed the country from the 1860s till the 1880s.

Plans for the weekend are well in hand and coming together nicely. There are just some 25 weeks before visitors start arriving in Bathurst so be sure to book or arrange your weekend accommodation if you plan to stay for the weekend.

The Bathurst Regional Council has granted permission to close Russell Street in front of the historic Bathurst Court House to hold the activities on the Saturday afternoon and has agreed to finance the cost of the closure. The Bathurst District Historical Society and the committee are very appreciative of their assistance.

Details, locations and information on the dinner, historic displays, talks, tours and other activities over the three days will appear in various issues of this e-newsletter and media as details are confirmed. The re-enactment of the event is currently being organised.

Please enjoy yourself whilst in Bathurst and be sure to visit some of the many other attractions that historic Bathurst and the district have to offer.

We hope that some families will use the weekend to incorporate a family reunion, especially on the Sunday. Some may wish to put a plaque on Bathurst’s Pioneer Wall which can be organised through the Bathurst District Historical Society on info@bathursthistory.org.au to arrange for the information and application form.

I hope you enjoy these monthly e-newsletters and that they will be interesting and beneficial. It will be great to meet people in person and I hope you all have a terrific weekend here in paradise.

If you wish to receive this e-newsletter direct just email amcrae@lisp.com.au

Alan McRae, FAIHA, President Bathurst District Historical Society

DINNER TO BE HELD AT HISTORIC BATHURST SHOWGROUND

A special Ben Hall Raid dinner will be held on the Saturday evening in the historic Beau Brown pavilion at the Bathurst Showground. It was reconstructed in 1891 and 1892 and was initially known as the Showground Art Gallery (pavilion) having been purchased at Ashfield and dismantled and numbered before bringing it to Bathurst on the train and re-erected on the grounds.

The re-erected pavilion seen in the mid 1890s which is being used for the Ben Hall Weekend Dinner.
BATHURST HISTORICAL SOCIETY TO OPEN NEW BUSHRANGER DISPLAY

The Bathurst District Historical Society is currently working on the proposed Bushrangers Room – incorporating the Edgar and Megan Penzig Collection. It is being established in the Society’s Museum in the east wing of the Bathurst Court House in Russell Street, opposite King’s Parade. Our Society was fortunate enough to receive a large amount of research material from Edgar’s many books that he produced before his death on Friday, 19th November, 2010, in Tasmania.

On the evening of Friday 27th September Megan Penzig will open this new display in conjunction with a Mayoral reception. Bathurst’s Mayor, Alderman Monica Morse, will be on hand for the official opening.

Megan and Edgar Penzig at BATHURST 2007 Exhibition at Bathurst Showground.

This new display, along with the Museum, (located in the East wing of the Bathurst Court House) will be open over the weekend to allow visitors to view the fascinating bushranger items for the normal museum entrance fee. The new room will feature clothing, photos, documents and bushranging memorabilia.

If anyone needs a Ben Hall Weekend programme either send a self-addressed stamped LDL envelope (with 60 cent stamp attached) to the Ben Hall Weekend Committee, Bathurst District Historical Society, PO Box 237, Bathurst N.S.W. 2795 or send an email to amcrae@lisp.com.au

BOOK LOCAL ACCOMMODATION EARLY!

Don’t forget to book your accommodation early for the Ben Hall Weekend. In the Bathurst Region we have the full assortment of accommodation from motels, hotels and caravan park to quaint bed and breakfasts, serviced apartments and self-catering properties for those not staying at the Bathurst Showgrounds. For a list of what accommodation is available during the weekend contact the Bathurst Visitor Information Centre – Freecall 1800 68 1000 or visitors@bathurst.nsw.gov.au

BATHURST DOCTOR AFFECTED BY GANG

Dr. Richard Machattie (left) was a doctor and surgeon in Bathurst during the years of the Ben Hall Gang. He had been born in Scotland in 1813 and by 1836 had graduated in Edinburgh as a surgeon. In 1838 he arrived in Sydney having been employed as a ship’s surgeon. He arrived in Bathurst soon after and took over Dr Favill’s practice and became one of the town’s prominent doctors.

For 20 years he was an elder in the Presbyterian Church and also became a Magistrate and Coroner for the district. In 1856 he was appointed the Bathurst Returning Officer at the first election for Responsible Government. He was an Alderman on the first Bathurst Municipal Council and Mayor four times. He died at his home in George Street in 1876.

He was known to travel great distances to see patients with one occasion being to treat Trooper Sutton who had been shot by some of Hall’s gang and was being looked after at McNamara’s Inn at Kings Plains.

The incident started when the Hall Gang raided the stables at Coombing Park near Carcoar, the property of Thomas Icely, Magistrate and wealthy landholder, during the evening of Sunday 2nd August, 1863. The gang was always in need of good horses and targeted Mr. Icely’s stables near the house. They were spotted but still headed off with some horses, shooting an employee known as Charley the German who was taken into Carcoar to see Dr. Rowland. Thomas Icely posted a £100 reward four days later ‘to any person who will give such information as will lead to the conviction of the guilty parties.’ One horse from the raid on Thomas Icely’s stables was a grey colour and was claimed by O’Meally to ride.

Trooper Sutton was shot in the arm in a hold-up by the bushrangers – Gilbert, O’Meally and Vane, on the coach transferring three men suspected at
helping the bushrangers in August 1863, en route to Bathurst. Sutton was put into the coach which proceeded to Kings Plains where he was left at McNamara’s Inn while the coach went on to Bathurst Gaol. Dr. Richard Machattie left Bathurst on the coach next morning to attend to the trooper. After dressing his wounds the trooper and Dr. Machattie were driven into Bathurst, the former recovering over time.

PLACES & ATTRACTIONS TO VISIT

BATHURST HISTORICAL SOCIETY MUSEUM

The Bathurst District Historical Society museum was the Bathurst Post Office in 1928 when this image was taken.

There are plenty of places to see in and around Bathurst, either before, during or after the upcoming Ben Hall Weekend 2013. The Bathurst Historical Society Museum is well worth a visit and is located in the old Bathurst Post Office which is in the East wing of the Bathurst Court House in Russell Street.

One item that will be on display over the weekend is the door that was on the residence of the then Gold Commissioner, Mr. Henry McCrummin Keightley, at Dunn’s Plains near the village of Rockley, some 30 miles out from Bathurst. As it happened the Commissioner had let it be known that he would show no clemency if he happened to find Ben Hall and his mates. The Commissioner had also arranged volunteers to look for Hall and the bushrangers.

The lads decided that they would pay him a visit so on 24th October, 1863, a pleasant Saturday evening, Mr. Keightley was standing outside his front door when he noticed five men on horses moving along one of his fences. Knowing that a party of police was patrolling in the area he assumed it was them. Suddenly realising that they were bushrangers he called out to Dr. Pechey. The gang made their way closer to the house and threatened the pair who hightailed it into the house, slamming the door behind them with the men firing at them, some lead lodging in the door which is still there.

For some illogical reason Keightley’s spare ammo and firearms were in an outhouse that the two trapped men couldn’t reach without probable injury. The Commissioner had been keeping an eye out through the door on one of the men, Michael (Mickey) Bourke, who looked out from behind his cover to fire. As Bourke looked out to fire Commissioner Keightley let fly with his shotgun severely injuring Bourke in the stomach. Bourke realising he was badly hit tried to shoot himself twice before dying within half an hour.

Keightley and Dr. Pechey headed for the roof where the Commissioner had specially constructed a fortification but unfortunately after firing off his last blast, his shotgun was out of powder. The bushrangers called on them to lay down their arms and come down, which they did. John Vane wanted to shoot Keightley, but Mrs. Caroline Keightley and a Mrs. Baldock intervened. Mr. Baldock had gone into Rockley some four miles away to deliver a letter before the bushrangers arrived so wasn’t there.

These two brave women were very heroic in pleading for Mr. Keightley’s life as the bushrangers wanted to shoot him basically on the spot. Someone then noticed Bourke was still taking small breaths and Dr. Pechey agreed to assist him but needed to go into Rockley for his bag and instruments. Not long after the doctor left Bourke died. Again the gang’s thoughts were to shoot the Commissioner. The two women again begged for his life.

With Dr. Pechey’s return to find Bourke had died it seemed that the end was nigh for the Commissioner. What changed the situation will never be known but the bushrangers decided to hold their hostage for ransom - £500 it was to be – the same amount as had been on Bourke’s head.

Caroline Keightley, two children and the doctor were dispatched to Bathurst in the middle of the night – they were not to talk to the police and must return or they knew what to expect. What a terrifying prospect from these unpredictable bandits.

Caroline Mary Rotton, daughter of Henry Rotton, was born at Solitary Creek near Rydal in 1841. By the time of the raid Henry Rotton lived at Blackdown near Kelso. (This historic house still stands today.) They were to ask her father to arrange the money.

Henry Rotton and the doctor set off back to Bathurst. The manager of the Commercial Bank, Mr. John Busby, was duly aroused, organised the cash and was sworn to secrecy. Both men then drove to Dunns Plains to deliver the pile of various pound notes. Commissioner Keightley was handed over and the bushrangers left.
The Commercial Bank in William Street, where its manager, John Busby, had taken up his duties at Bathurst on 29th April, 1862.

DR WILLIAM PALMER, POLICE MAGISTRATE & JOHN VANE

Dr. William Hall Palmer had a distinguished career as the Police Magistrate at Bathurst from December 1854 until November 1869, a period of some fifteen years.

Prior to coming to Bathurst Dr. Palmer J.P. resided at Megalong in the Vale of Clwyd (better known as the district of Hartley) before being despatched to the Wellington district as Commissioner of Crown Lands by January 1852. Before long he was appointed the new Police Magistrate for Bathurst after the aging and unwell Major D’Arcy Wentworth resigned as Police Magistrate in late 1854. It meant that he became the Government’s principal agent in the district indicating the importance of Bathurst at this time.

He was responsible for a reasonable area with the overseeing of stores for Government use in the district. He was also responsible for adjudicating issues concerning licences, roads, impounding matters, slaughtering and crown land matters. Roads and maintenance was also his area as well as presiding over the magistrate’s bench. Dr. Palmer not only took the initial steps with misdemeanours and felonies but also submitted details of sentences to the N.S.W. Governor. He also had general control over the local constables. Initially paid a small wage he was later paid £450 per annum as well as a house allowance of £65 and £55 for forage for his horses (maybe the early equivalent of a car allowance).

It was during his time as Police Magistrate in Bathurst that Dr. Palmer was to meet the bushranger John Vane and have Vane surrender to him. Vane had been born in 1842, the son of William and Ann Vane. John received little in the way of education however he grew up in the bush, lived off the bush and knew all the bush ways. In his teenage years he and a mate, Michael Bourke, foolishly stole a number of cattle. After drinking too much, Vane took the licensee’s revolver which, when reported, saw a warrant issued for the two men. Whilst moving through the area they encountered bushrangers Johnny Gilbert and John O’Meally. Foolishly they decided to join the gang in 1863.

Vane was on the robbery ‘Coombing Park’ near Carcoar and then for the attack of the District’s Assistant Gold Commissioner, Mr Keightley, at Dunn’s Plains when Michael Bourke was shot. After this, Vane split with the Hall Gang. Some time later, a Catholic Priest by chance met him in the bush in late October. Father Timothy McCarthy managed to talk Vane into the idea of surrendering, returning to him for further meetings to sort out what would take place. Father McCarthy had also contacted Vane’s mother who also begged her son to give himself up.

Bathurst Court House built in 1849 and added to later. Here Vane was brought before the Court.

Father McCarthy had organised with a Justice of the Peace, Mr. N. Connolly, to complete a letter before taking John Vane to Bathurst where the latter was left at a local hotel in George Street, situated between Keppel and Piper Streets (near the first Catholic Church) with Mary Walsh, the licensee having taken over the hostellery in 1861. The Father then visited Superintendent Morisset to inform him Vane was in town and what was about to happen.

After this meeting Father McCarthy had breakfast with Vane before the pair, along with Rev. Dean Grant arrived at the Court House in Russell Street to surrender to the Police Magistrate, Dr. William Palmer. It was 19th November, 1863. Vane was then remanded and imprisoned in the old Bathurst Gaol opposite the Webb’s emporium. Afterwards Father McCarthy refused the Government reward of £1000 along with a £100 reward from the bank.

On the same day that John Vane appeared in Bathurst and surrendered, Ben Hall, along with the two Johns, Gilbert and O’Meally, attacked the Campbell’s homestead near Eugowra. It was here
O’Meally’s life was to end, taken by David Campbell.

Bathurst Gaol where John Vane was held until his trial took place.

On completing his trial and sentencing at Bathurst, Vane was taken under heavy guard and transported to Darlinghurst Gaol to serve his fifteen year sentence. He didn’t stay here long as the system moved Vane around so he also served part of his sentence at Cockatoo Island. Still, at quite a young age, Vane was released early in 1870 due to his good behaviour and letters from the Police Magistrate Dr. Palmer. After release, John Vane decided to remain in Sydney for a number of years, however it seems he had a yearning for the bush life.

John Vane made his way back to Carcoar but again fell foul of the police for stealing, receiving a five year gaol term for his efforts. Then, not long after being freed, Vane was convicted of sheep stealing in 1880 and was sent to Bathurst Gaol again for a five year term. The problem of stealing livestock, especially cattle and horses, was still rife when one reads the court reports in the Bathurst Daily Times. John Vane died in 1906.

**DID YOU KNOW?**
- That as a result of the bushranging activities banks used to cut their banknotes in half when transferring them from one bank to another. When the first lot of halves arrived the bank manager notified the sender who then dispatched the ‘other’ half. It was usually the bank clerk’s job to join them back together with glue and paper tape.
- The gold that was found along the Turon River and other goldfields was turned into gold sovereigns and half sovereigns at the Royal Mint in Sydney which commenced minting the coins on 23rd June, 1855. The reverse was unique as it featured the word “Australia”, the only time it would ever appear on an Australian sovereign and the obverse featured a new and young Queen Victoria with a sprig of banksia in her hair. The British Government certainly had not expected the Sydney Mint to use its own design, which was later changed.

A rare wrapper (envelope) (above) features an 1856-1860 2d blue Queen Victoria New South Wales stamp cancelled with a heavy ‘N.S.W.’ oval on OHMS wrapper (that had been sealed with wax) - addressed to Dr. Palmer, ‘The Police Magistrate’, with “Bathurst” added underneath. The wrapper is backstamped with “BATHURST/AP16/1857/N.S.W.” and a light ‘Sydney’ cancel. It was dispatched 14th April, 1857, arriving in Bathurst from Sydney 16th April (two days later – not a bad service for those days). The letter was from the Colonial Secretary’s Office and was answered on 17th April.

In November 1869 Mr. John Milbourne Marsh took over from Dr. Palmer as Bathurst’s Police Magistrate. Marsh remained as Police Magistrate at Bathurst until he took up another job in Sydney in 1874. By 1874 Dr. Palmer had established himself on the Parramatta River at Hunter’s Hill.

**BEN HALL RAID WEEKEND FESTIVAL CONTACTS**

Alan McRae, President, Bathurst District Historical Society. Phone 63315404 evening is best or email amcmrae@lisp.com.au

Publicity & e-newsletter
email amcmrae@lisp.com.au or phone 63315404 - evening is best.

Dinner Bookings
Bathurst District Historical Society, P.O. Box 237, Bathurst NSW 2795 or personally to the BDHS Museum, East Wing, Bathurst Court House, Russell Street, Bathurst. 63324755 or 63308455 – Best times 11am – 2pm Tuesday to Sunday. info@bathursthistory.org.au

Russell Street Activities & Space Co-Ordinator
Samantha Friend, Phone 63294233 samantha.friend@hotmail.com

For other information go to the following website at www.bathursthistory.org.au for the weekend programme and more information.

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