

Newsletter of the

TOWNSVILLE MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY Inc.

June 2020

1/27 Barbeler Street Currajong Q 4812

PO Box 785 Hyde Park Q 4812



Special Points of Interest:

- *The Story of John Joseph Oxley*
- *Part 6—Shunting in Townsville by Nick Shailer*
- *Acquisition—Townsville Horticultural Society Programmes 1939—1955*

A MESSAGE FROM OUR PRESIDENT

So many plans for 2020 and then chaos – along comes COVID 19. Even cyclones don't cause so much drama. The Museum has been closed since the 19th March but the good news is we are "open" again as of Monday 15th June. There will be a lot of challenges for the volunteers with new regulations but it will be so nice to see visitors once again. Even though the Museum has been closed, work still goes on. Some displays have been upgraded and new ones added.

Earlier in the year all the Museums in Townsville worked on a combined Museums Brochure so visitors to the City will have all the information available in one brochure so they can plan tours of each one. Townsville has 5 Museums – Townsville Museum, Army Museum, RAAF Museum, Maritime Museum, Museum of Tropical Queensland and a Family History association. Take a trip across the Bay to Magnetic Island and visit their wonderful Museum. These brochures are available at all accommodation and some cafe outlets in the City. Our planned "Picnic in the Park" open day at the Museum in May and Heritage Day in June were all cancelled, but I work on the philosophy "*there is always next year*".

As I mentioned in the last newsletter, we are always looking for more volunteers. If we have additional volunteers available, this gives others the chance to take holidays and no one has to work extra days to cover the gap. So if you know someone who has recently retired and would like to keep busy and enjoys history, then I will more than welcome them to the Museum.

Stay safe, stay well and let's hope the rest of 2020 starts to return to normal and we welcome visitors to our region once again.

Best wishes,
Trish Cronin
President

Monthly committee meetings are held at the Museum on the third Monday of the month at ten o'clock. All committee members are notified a week prior to the meeting.



John Oxley, n.d.

[State Library of New South Wales, 10806](#)

Inside this issue:

Oxley Street, North Ward	2
Shunting in Townsville Part 6 by Nick Shailer	6
Recent Acquisition—Townsville Horticultural Society Programmes	9
Post Isolation Volunteers Meeting	11
Membership Renewal Reminder	12

TOWNSVILLE MUSEUM AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

BUSINESS HOURS

Monday to Friday

9:00 am to 2:30 pm

First and Third Sundays of the month

1:30 pm to 3:30 pm

ENTRY Adults \$2 Chn 50c

MEMBERSHIP FEES

(12 months from 1st July to 30th June)

Single \$ 11.00

Couples \$ 16.50

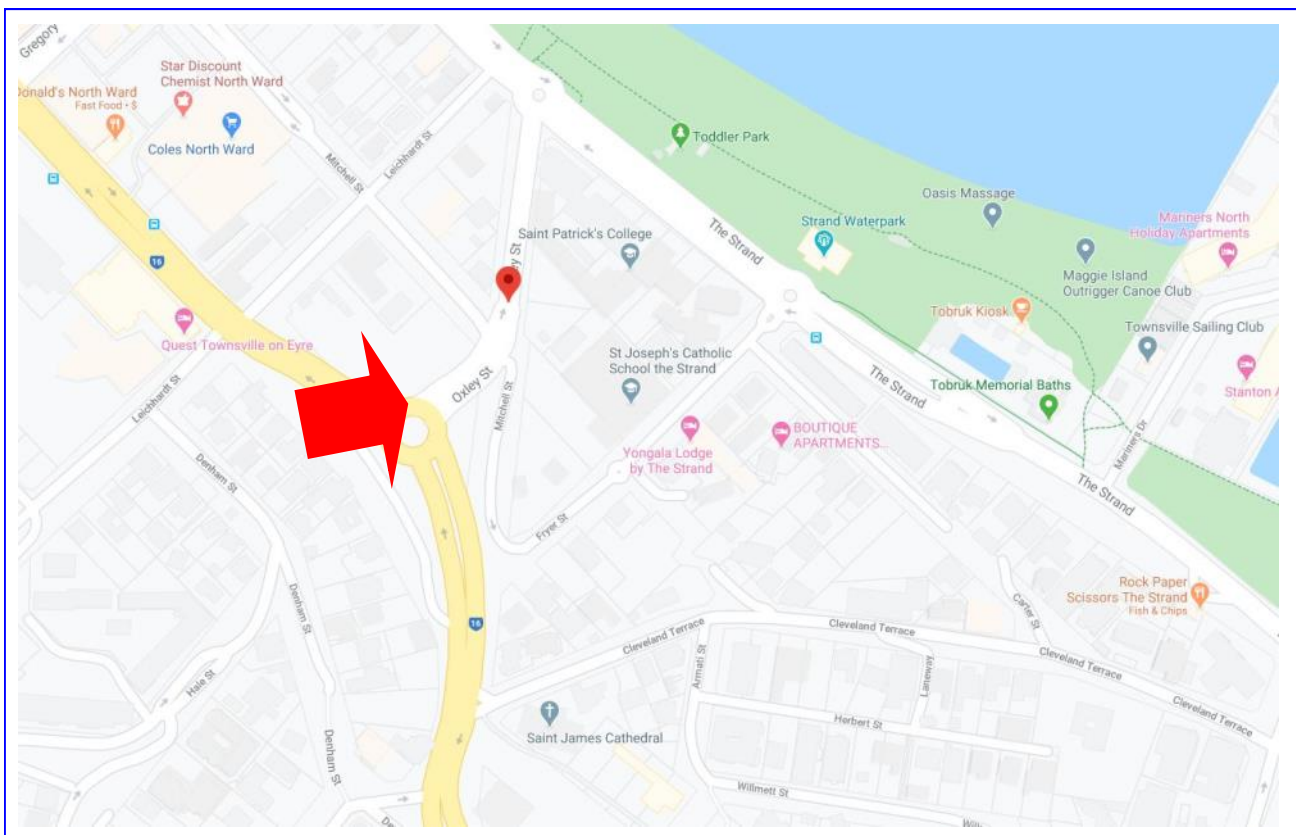
Corporate \$ 32.50

OXLEY STREET

Oxley Street, North Ward. John Joseph William Molesworth Oxley (1785?-1828) surveyor-general and explorer, arrived in Australia in 1802, where he engaged in coastal survey work, including an expedition to Western Port in 1804-05. He returned to England and resigned from the Navy.

Following his successful application for the appointment of Surveyor-General, he sailed for Sydney again in May 1812. In 1817 he led an expedition to trace the course of the Lachlan River and in the following year followed the Macquarie River until it disappeared in "an ocean of reeds". His exploration of the Brisbane River in 1823 was followed quickly by the formation of a penal settlement on its banks.

Mathew, J. (1995). *Highways and Byways*. Townsville, Queensland: Townsville City Council.



Below is an excerpt from the Australian Dictionary of Biographies on **OXLEY, John Joseph (1784-1828)**

By E. W. Dunlop

This article was published in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Volume 2, (MUP), 1967

John Joseph William Molesworth Oxley (1784?-1828), surveyor-general and explorer, was born at Kirkham Abbey near Westow, Yorkshire, England, and baptised at Bulmer on 6 July 1784, the eldest son of John Oxley and his wife Isabella, who was related to the Irish Viscount Molesworth. He joined the navy in 1799 as a midshipman in the *Venerable*, and transferred in November 1801 to the *Buffalo*, in which as master's mate he sailed to Australia.

JOHN JOSEPH OXLEY—DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY ENTRY

Arriving there in October 1802 he engaged in coastal survey work including an expedition to Western Port in 1804-05. In 1805 Governor [Philip Gidley King](#) appointed him acting lieutenant in charge of the *Buffalo*, and in 1806 he commanded the *Estramina* on a trip to Van Diemen's Land. Next year he returned to England where on 25 November he was commissioned lieutenant. He came back to Sydney in November 1808 to take up an appointment as first lieutenant in H.M.S. *Porpoise*, having sailed out as agent for the Transport Board in the convict ship *Speke*, in which he shipped goods worth £800 as an investment. He had obtained an order from the Colonial Office for a grant of 600 acres (243 ha) near the Nepean River, but Lieutenant-Governor [William Paterson](#) granted him 1000 acres (405 ha). Oxley had to surrender these in 1810, but Governor [Lachlan Macquarie](#) granted him 600 acres (243 ha) near Camden which he increased in 1815 to 1000 acres (405 ha) again. This he called Kirkham.

When Paterson allowed the deposed Governor [William Bligh](#) to leave Sydney in the *Porpoise* in March 1809 Oxley was aboard and sailed with Bligh to the Derwent. Next year he wrote a lengthy report on the settlements in Van Diemen's Land before sailing for England in the *Porpoise* in May. In London he applied for the post of Naval Officer in Sydney, and then, after paying [Charles Grimes](#) to resign, according to [John Macarthur](#), he twice sought that of surveyor-general. Oxley denied that he had been a partisan of Macarthur when Bligh was deposed, but his letters show that he was on very intimate terms with the rebel leader. In 1812 he became engaged to Elizabeth Macarthur; this was broken off when her father discovered the extent of Oxley's debts. By that time, through the influence of Macarthur's friend [Walter Davidson](#), Oxley's second application for the surveyor-generalship had been successful. In 1811 he had retired from the navy, and in May 1812 sailed for Sydney in the *Minstrel* to take up his new duties.

During Governor Macquarie's administration Oxley was as much occupied with exploring as surveying. In 1815 his assistant, [George Evans](#), discovered the Lachlan River and reported good country south-west of Bathurst. In March 1817 Macquarie appointed Oxley to lead an expedition to explore this region and if possible 'to ascertain the real course ... of the Lachlan ... and whether it falls into the sea, or into some inland lake'. Leaving Bathurst on 28 April the explorers followed the Lachlan for more than two months until in July impassable marshes prevented further progress. Oxley then struck northward to the Macquarie River, which he traced back to Bathurst, where he arrived on 29 August. Macquarie highly praised Oxley's 'Zealous, Indefatigable and Intelligent Exertions' and recommended that he be given £200 for his 'Meritorious Services', which the secretary of state approved.

On 28 May 1818 Oxley led another expedition from Bathurst and followed the Macquarie River until it too disappeared into 'an ocean of reeds' (Macquarie marshes). From 6 July Oxley's party proceeded north-east until they discovered the Castlereagh River, then turning east they found the rich Liverpool Plains, reached and named the Peel River, crossed the southern part of the New England Range near Walcha, found the Hastings River and followed it to its estuary which was named Port Macquarie. A hazardous journey down the coast ended at Newcastle in November, some six months after the party's departure from Bathurst. The rich pastoral lands of the Liverpool Plains were quickly taken up by pastoralists, but Oxley failed in his primary

JOHN JOSEPH OXLEY—DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY ENTRY

object of tracing the Macquarie and Lachlan Rivers and formulated the mistaken theory of an inland sea. 'I feel confident', he wrote, 'we were in the immediate vicinity of an inland sea, most probably a shoal one ... being filled up by immense depositions from the waters flowing into it from the higher lands'. Nevertheless his reports aroused great interest, and not only did his *Journals of Two Expeditions Into the Interior of New South Wales* (London, 1820) give the first detailed description of the Australian inland, despite his grave doubts of the value of the lands he had traversed, but his discoveries paved the way for the later work of [Charles Sturt](#) and [Sir Thomas Mitchell](#).

Oxley's naval experience fitted him better for coastal survey work than for inland exploration. In September-December 1819 he made a trip by sea to Jervis Bay, where he thought the country did not offer 'the smallest inducement for the foundation of a Settlement on its shores, being ... for the most part Barren and generally deficient in Water'. Earlier that year in the *Lady Nelson*, assisted by [Phillip Parker King](#) in the *Mermaid*, he had charted Port Macquarie, on which he reported favourably. In December 1820 he made a second survey of the district and reported in favour of establishing a new penal settlement there. In October 1823 he sailed north as far as Port Curtis, and on his return explored Moreton Bay and the Brisbane River, up which he sailed about fifty miles (80 km). His favourable report was again quickly followed by the formation of a penal settlement.

In 1820 Oxley had made several suggestions to Commissioner [John Thomas Bigge](#) about the sale of land in New South Wales. Bigge accepted these and, when Governor [Sir Thomas Brisbane](#) received his report, Oxley drafted in July 1824 specific regulations for sales at 5s an acre, to be paid over three years; in 1825 and again in 1826 he drew up further regulations on land grants in accordance with the fluctuating orders of the Colonial Office. In 1825 he was appointed one of the three commissioners to carry out the thorough survey of the colony and its division into counties, shires and parishes which had been ordered from London; but this work was not easily accomplished. The duties of the survey office became very extensive as settlement expanded and Oxley was always handicapped by the lack of a sufficiently numerous trained staff. Governor [\(Sir\) Ralph Darling](#) thought him 'very clever' but a man who would 'never submit to the Drudgery of carrying on the details of his Department'. He constantly sought increases in fees, salary and staff, but though both Macquarie and Brisbane supported his requests, the secretary of state was reluctant to incur the extra expenditure. In 1823 his salary was increased from 15s. to £1 a day; his fees had been increased in 1818 and between 1823 and 1828 brought him an average of nearly £1500 a year.

Oxley also had business interests. After he arrived in New South Wales in 1812 he acted as agent for Maude & Robinson of the Cape and Thomas & William Ward of London. He acted for the creditors of [Garnham Blaxcell](#) and [Robert Campbell](#) and of the firm of Lord, [Kable & Underwood](#). He kept in touch with Walter Davidson at Canton, and acted for [Jeffery Hart Bent](#) with Alexander & Co. of Calcutta. In addition to these mercantile activities he was developing his properties and entered into partnership with Commissary [David Allan](#) in raising cattle for the stores. Near his property, Kirkham, he received further grants of 820 acres (332 ha) at Minto

JOHN JOSEPH OXLEY—DICTIONARY OF BIOGRAPHY ENTRY

in 1816 and 630 acres (255 ha) at Appin in 1817. After 1816 he sent cattle into the Bowral district and in June 1823 was granted 2300 acres (931 ha) there registered as Weston (probably a mistake for Westow). As a sheep breeder he took prizes at the shows of the Agricultural Society which he helped to found in 1822, though in 1824 John Macarthur criticized his 4000 crossbred sheep which, he said, Oxley sold as pure merinos to strangers; but Oxley and Macarthur were then on very bad terms. For a time Oxley was a director of the Bank of New South Wales, but in 1826 he was one of the founders and first directors of its 'exclusivist' rival, the Bank of Australia. He was a shareholder of the Australian Agricultural Co., which appears to have paid him for advice and assistance.

Oxley was keenly interested in the public and cultural life of the colony. He was one of the first officers of the Bible Society when it was founded in 1817. In September 1819 he was appointed to the committee of the Female Orphan Institution, the Male Orphan Institution and the Public School Institution. In 1821 he became a foundation member of the Philosophical Society, and that December Governor Brisbane made him a magistrate. He subscribed to both St James's Church and to Scots Church where he was one of the congregation which in 1824 petitioned for government assistance for its minister. He was selected as one of the five members of the original Legislative Council in 1824, but was not reappointed when the council was reconstituted next year. He had always been a strong exclusive. Macquarie criticized him as 'factious and dissatisfied'. In 1812 John Macarthur wrote warmly of Oxley's 'good nature'; later he spoke in a very different vein after 'his unprincipled conduct made it necessary to drop his acquaintance'. Whatever his character his financial incapacity is clear, and this made him, in Macarthur's opinion, 'no more fit to make his way in the midst of the sharks among whom it will be his fate to live than he is qualified to be a Lord Chancellor'. Despite his investments, his fees and his land grants, when he died at Kirkham on 26 May 1828, he was so 'much embarrassed in his pecuniary circumstances' that the Executive Council felt compelled to recommend special assistance to his widow and children. The British government refused to sanction a pension but agreed to permit a grant of 5000 acres (2024 ha) to Oxley's sons in recognition of their father's services.

On 31 October 1821 Oxley married Emma Norton (1798-1885) at St Philip's Church. They had two sons, John (b.1824) and Henry (b.1826), but earlier Oxley had had two daughters by Charlotte Thorpe and one by Elizabeth Marnon. He kept a substantial town house in Sydney, opposite St James's Church, and he built a fine country seat at Kirkham. He was aged only 42 when he died, but his constitution had 'been materially injured by the privations which he suffered during the Several Expeditions on which he was employed in exploring the Interior'. He was buried in the Devonshire Street cemetery in Sydney.

E. W. Dunlop, 'Oxley, John Joseph (1784-1828)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/oxley-john-joseph-2530/text3431>, published first in hardcopy 1967, accessed online 14 June 2020.



SHUNTING IN TOWNSVILLE SERIES—PART 6

Nick Shailer's Memoirs

There were 3 main signal cabins in the Townsville City area.

A cabin, which still stands on the western end of the yard, controlled signals for the North Yard and workshops shunts, locos off the pit and for many years, trains departing to the north and south from the north yard. From this cabin, this signalman also controlled arrivals into the Railway Station.

B cabin was on the town end of the yard and had a small set of signal and points levers and was run by a shunter. This cabin handled locos off the pit via Lowths Bridge to Fork Line and incoming locos from the same place, and also worked a shunt signal over the bridge when required by the North Yard shunt.

Forkline was the major cabin with over 30 levers and was run by a signal man assisted by a porter, and was located just up from the National Crossing which was the Boundary Street -Railway Avenue crossing. From here, all trains coming and going were handled. Trains to and from north yard via B cabin travelled on a train staff (which is a metal rod), but those to and from A cabin worked on a block instrument.

Trains to and from Oonoonba travelled via block instrument working. All workings were recorded in a trains working book which was stored near the staff instrument inside the signals cabin. Trains to and from the jetty and south yard were also handled from here.

This cabin was an interesting one in that it leaned badly due to Cyclone Althea. The one thing that stopped it being blown over was the levers and tray. A typical railway repair job was carried out on the building. Some railway line was used as props to hold the building upright and 3 inches was cut off one side of the door so it could close.

This building also had a close call when a runaway diesel loco derailed in front of it. Another fact about this cabin was that the signalman on duty in the 1946 flood spent three days trapped in there.



These miniatures show left to right: Staff Instrument, Block Instrument, and a Staff Box in the foreground.

Accessed from Wongm's Rail Gallery 16 June 2020

SHUNTING IN TOWNSVILLE SERIES—6 NICK SHAILER'S MEMOIRS

The signal cabin at the jetty controlled traffic to and from there to Morey Street where there was a small cabin at the jetty end of South Yard. This was run by a shunter. There were 2 staff instruments here. One was painted blue and the other red and they were linked to corresponding ones in the Jetty Cabin.

Oonoomba Station also had a signal cabin at one end. There had also been a cabin at Stuart but by the time I started work, this area was operated by a control panel in the station master's office which worked electric points.

There would have been a signal cabin at Garbutt Station but I have no recollection of it, as I was seldom there.

All the cabins, station masters' offices, shunting yards and foremen's offices were connected by an omnibus phone system, most with manual ringers and some with electronic ones. Each location had its own ring code and from memory, Morey Street cabin was short-short-long. Even after the introduction of radios, this system was still in use .

As a lad porter, I was shown how to do the number-taker's job. This involved writing down the wagon length, wagon type, running number, where from, where to, contents weight, total weight and contents.

It would look like something like this:

FJS 23579 Tsv to Ingham 4 (ton) total 10 (ton) Hay

You recorded this for all wagons on the train giving you a total length and weight, a copy for the guard, the driver, a copy to the telegraph office and a copy for the files.

I was shown the job for half an hour before being sent to take my first train. In later years, men would be given weeks of training on different shifts and in different yards.

I spent some years relieving in this job while men were on leave, ending up permanently as one of the North Yard number-takers, filling in for one of the older number-takers who was sent off on stress leave after setting off to strangle the controller with whom he had just had a big argument. He never returned and after doing his job for some two years, I was appointed to his position having acted in it for so long.

A reorganization saw us number-takers rotate between both North and South Yards and on North Yard closing, we all operated from South Yard.

The jetty had its own number-takers and I did, at times, work there.

South Yard had about 14 number-takers, 2 per shift with another 2 on over lapping shifts and another on yard report, so 13 of us on duty each day.

SHUNTING IN TOWNSVILLE SERIES 6—NICK SHAILER'S MEMOIRS

It was a good job and all who did it, enjoyed it. In the end, computers came along and we were used to gathering the information (wagons and locations) to help place everything on the computer systems. We stayed in our jobs for some time, doing it all on the computer. The plan was to put the Number-takers through a school on how to work the computers. After several weeks, management realized I and several others were operating the systems without training, so they packed us off immediately to Brisbane for two weeks of computer school.

Scott Holcroft, another number-taker, and I also ended up with operating authority over most yards in North Queensland as problem solvers, helping out others until they could run things.

Nick Shailer

November 2018



QR2170 Class 2 210D

Accessed Wikimedia

16 June 2020

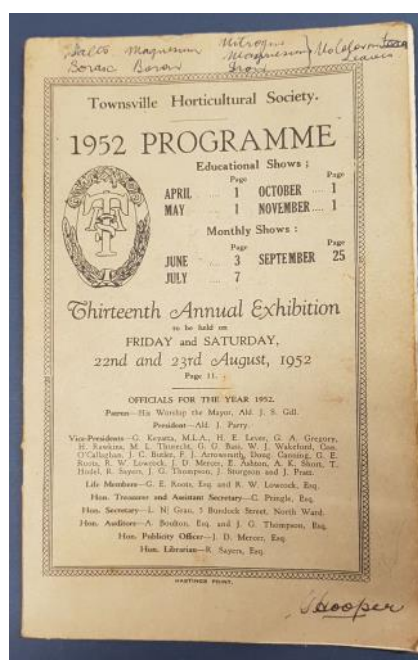
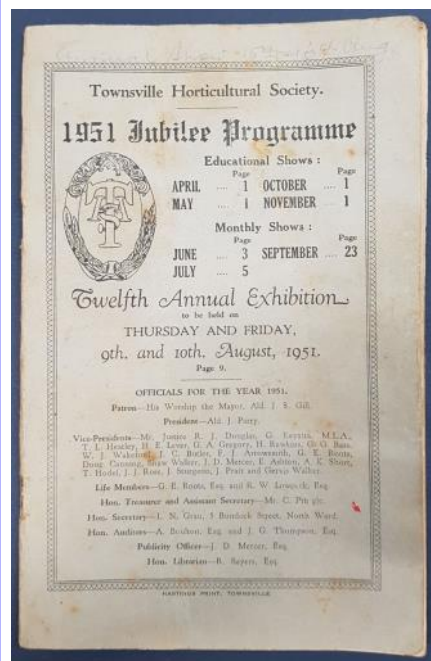
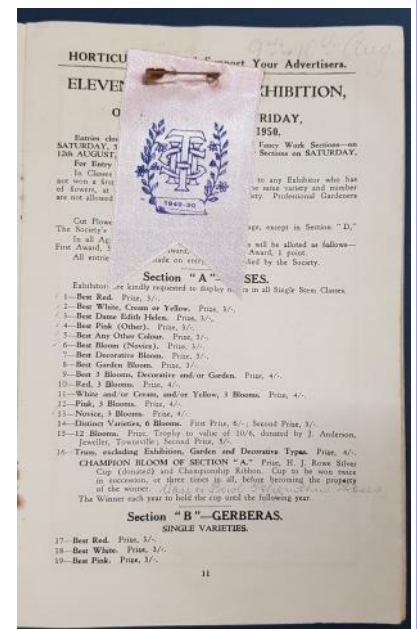
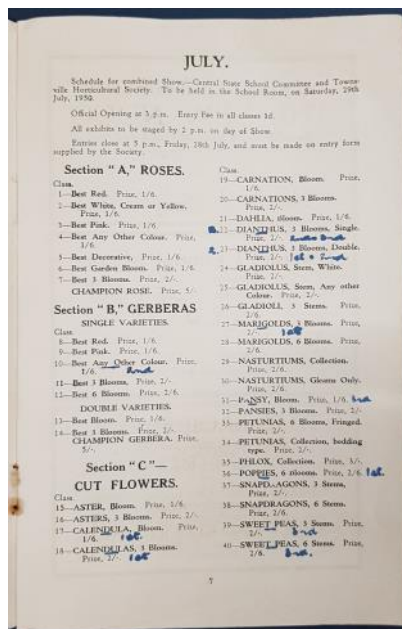
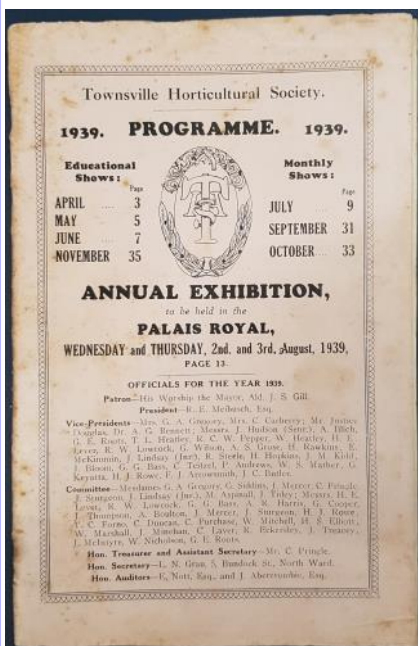
To be continued.....



RECENT ACQUISITION—TOWNSVILLE MUSEUM

Recently, Mr Kevin Hooper donated some items to Townsville which had belonged to his father, Gordon Hooper. One part of the donation included 7 Townsville Horticultural Society Programmes, beginning with the inaugural programme of 1939 and the last one is the 1955 Programme.

Kevin is writing some history for us so I'll share some of this in our next issue. Until then, here are some pages for you to enjoy.



Pages from the Programmes owned by Gordon Hooper.

From top left: 1939 cover, Placings noted from July 1950, Exhibitor's ribbon from 1949-50, 1951 Jubilee Programme, 1952 Programme.

Townsville Horticultural Society Programmes

belonging to Gordon Hooper

(Donated to Townsville Museum by Kevin Hooper in 2020)

These are some of the businesses which supported the newly formed Townsville Horticultural Society from 1939 to 1955.



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Post Isolation Volunteers Meeting



Like all organisations Australia wide, our Museum closed in March while we all bunkered down to beat the invisible virus.

Once we had a commencement date for our reopening, Trish Cronin convened a meeting on 25th May with as many of our volunteers as could be rounded up. Our Museum would be reopening to the public on 15th June.

New systems have been put in place to protect the volunteers and the visitors to the museum. Contact details are now required for each visitor and hand sanitisers and disinfectant sprays are in place.

On our first week back in business, we are happy to report some visitors and book sales have been very healthy. We're all looking forward to being busy, especially as the school holidays are just around the corner.



Welcome back to the Townsville Museum!



Townsville Museum

&

Historical Society Inc.

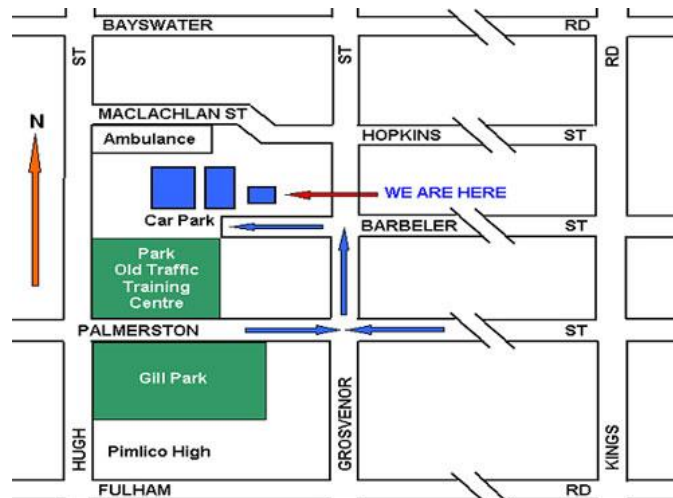
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HYDE PARK QLD 4812

Phone: 07 4775 7838

Email: admin@townsvillemuseum.com.au

Website: <http://www.townsvillemuseum.com.au>



TOWNSVILLE MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS ARE NOW DUE

**Please support us as we endeavour to keep the history of Townsville
alive and well.**

Membership emails and mail outs will be arriving at your place shortly.



OUR SUPPORTERS

Support

The

Groups

That

Support your

Museum

