



HELM



Heritage of East Lake Macquarie

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FEBRUARY 2020

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GETTING AROUND - 100 YEARS AGO

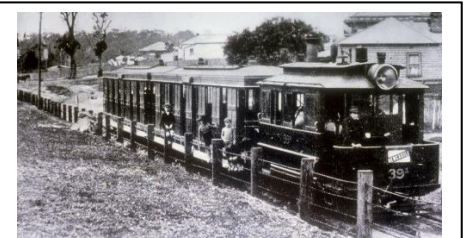
200 YEARS AGO: In **1820** the road from Sydney to Newcastle was a long way around; a tedious, time consuming, and uncomfortable journey on the Great North Road. Some 260 km had to be travelled through Windsor, Wiseman's Ferry, Wollombi and Maitland. The only other route was by sea. There was a constant search to find a shorter link to Newcastle. Later, Swansea was reached by another road which branched from Great North Road at Wiseman's Ferry to Mangrove Mountain, Gosford, Wyong, Catherine Hill Bay, then Swansea. In 1889 the last link for the railway line – the Hawkesbury River bridge was opened. There was no Pacific Highway. Crossing the Hawkesbury was by George Peat's ferry established in 1840 between Kangaroo and Mooney Mooney Points. In **1920** there was still no direct road link to Newcastle. Pressure mounted for a shorter route as road traffic steadily increased from 1905 onwards. Road building occurred gradually with the final piece of the link – the road bridge at the Hawkesbury River replacing Peats Ferry in 1945. Due to the lack of, or poor condition of roads, boats were one of the earliest forms of transport; not just for goods, coal and timber, but also people up until 1950s. In 1889, 3 passenger ferries ran daily between Swansea and Cockle Creek; the Wangi Wangi Ferry Company ran 3 ferries including the Wangi Pioneer delivering groceries, mail, papers, meat and bread. Miners were ferried to the nearest wharf on Monday and walked the rest of the way, returning home on Friday. In 1920 a very limited steam tram network operated from Newcastle to Wallsend, Speers Point and West Wallsend; but did not reach Swansea. By 1930 it was converted to electric operation. In 1920, people mainly walked, rode horses, cycled, used horse drawn vehicles, bullock trains; as motor vehicles started to make an appearance.



Peats Ferry & Mooney Mooney 1920



Wangi Pioneer



West Wallsend steam tram terminus



Early travel; 1920 1
 Vehicles 1920 2
 NRMA 100 years 3-4

Share in our heritage at the beautifully restored St Peter's Chapel (1884); and enjoy some refreshments at ARTea's Garden and Gallery, Josephson St. Chapel open, Fridays 10 am – 2pm; ARTea's open Wed – Sat 10am -2pm.



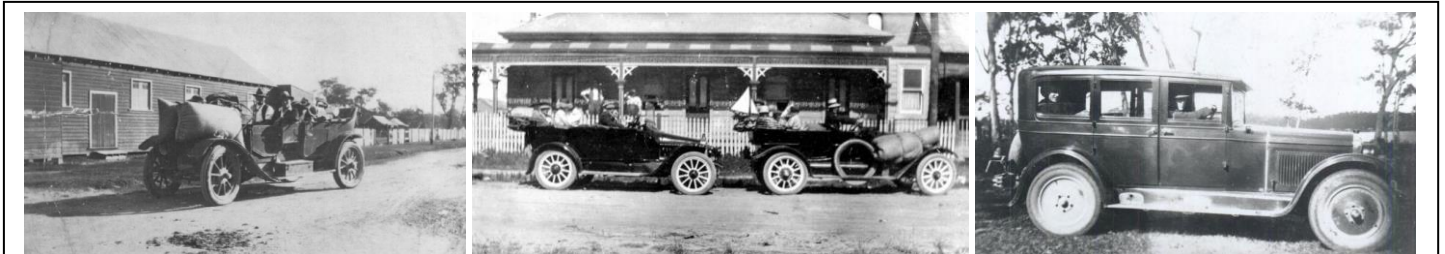
first national | Andrew McGrath

Kindly supporting the community – including Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club; this edition of HELM newsletter.

**SWANSEA PLAZA ARCADE
 NEAR COLES – Ph: 4972 1066
 CHECK OUT THEIR FACEBOOK**

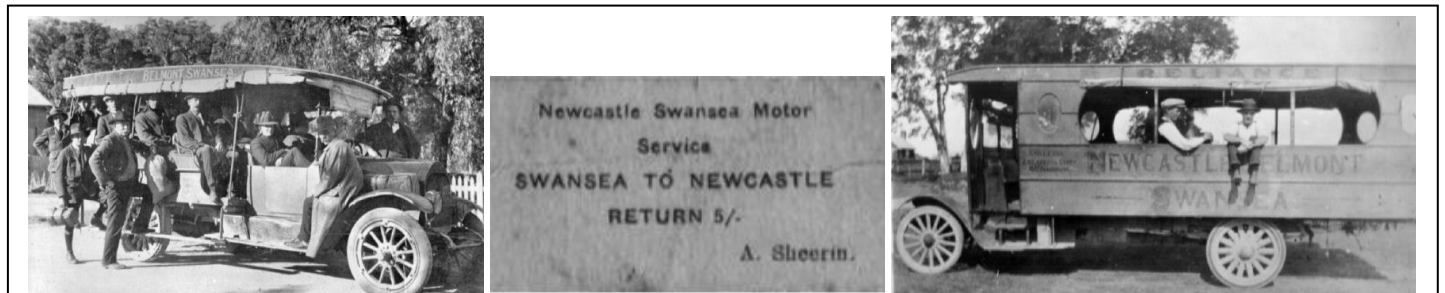
SWANSEA IN 1920.

On the eastern side of Main Road, was the Boughton Estate. John Boughton was a grazier from the Paterson River area. He purchased land in the 1830s which was bounded by the Channel to the roundabout; Bowman St and out to Swansea Heads, including Black Ned's Bay. He acquired this land to establish an evaporative salt works operated by his assigned convicts, expecting it to become a profitable business as salt was in great demand as a meat preservative and as an antiseptic. However, the evaporation method he was using was not very productive and he closed the business. This land was subdivided later and became the Northcote Estate, on Bowman St., which runs beside what are now the southbound lanes of the Pacific Highway.

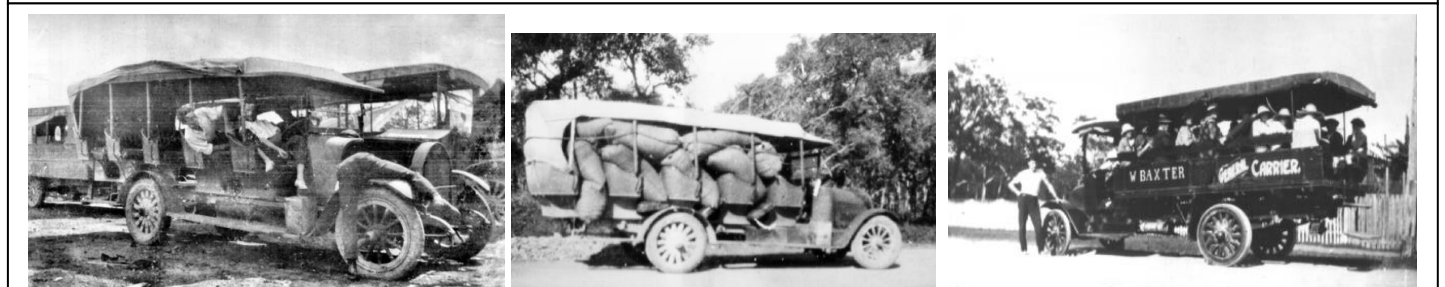


1. Carrying people and goods, c.1920, beside Swansea Picture Hall in Lake Rd. 2. Holiday makers heading for Swansea in 1921. 3. A Nash Standard at Swansea. Nash motors was an American car manufacturer based in Wisconsin, USA from 1916 to 1937. *Source: George Boyd; Norm Barney; LMCC Community History*

The first major car maker in Australia was Ford Australia, founded in Geelong, Victoria in 1925, as an outpost for Ford Canada. (Henry Ford had granted manufacturing rights to Canadian investors and they operated as a separate company to Ford USA.) The first cars produced were Model T Fords, assembled from kits. In 1926, General Motors Australia was officially formed, importing American chassis for their Holden designs and parts. At this time many people still depended on horses and horse drawn vehicles for transport. To be able to accommodate them, they needed large blocks of land, as can be seen in Swansea's subdivisions at the time. The picture to the right is taken from about where Dan Murphy's is now located, looking south. On the left-hand side is where Alec Sheerin established a bus service in 1911, as many people depended on public transport.



1. c.1920 bus about to depart for Newcastle; Alec's daughter Martha Dunn is the driver. 2. Return ticket from Swansea to Newcastle was 5 shillings. That is 50 cents in decimal currency; but in today's value about \$18. 3. The 'Reliance' was licensed to carry 40 passengers. Seen in this photo are Bill Harman and Doug Ham.



1. The bus 'Geoffrey' being repaired, by driver Erland Boon in 1922. 2. Bags of chaff loaded in 'Geoffrey'. Buses often carried goods. Alec Sheerin's transport business was eventually taken over by William and Martha Dunn. 3. Baxter's lorry taking picnic party to Caves Beach; also carried miners to Catherine Hill Bay; and coal. *Source: G & N Boyd.*

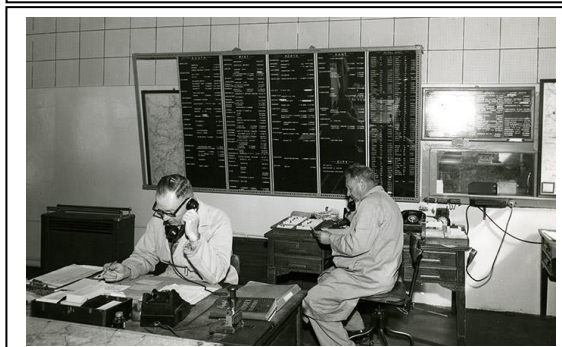
THE NRMA WAS ESTABLISHED IN NSW FEBRUARY 1920

In 1920 most roads were not much better than tracks with many deep potholes, so the NRMA was formed to advocate for better roads and offer support when incidents occurred. The early patrolmen were known as guides and rode motorbikes to offer assistance, wearing the uniforms of the Light Horse Brigade.



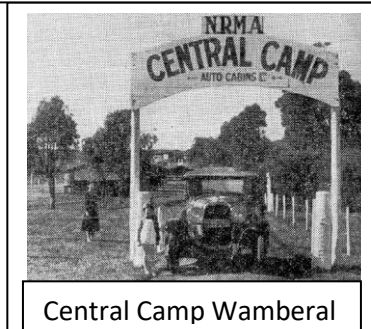
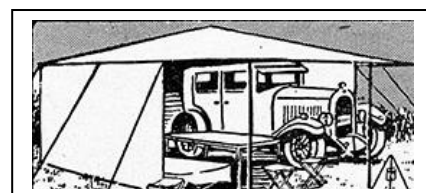
In the days before telephone boxes and two-way radios, patrols would drive around Sydney on their Douglas motor bikes looking for people having trouble. When phone boxes appeared, they had to call in from them for their next job. Then in 1949, a new fleet of vans was fitted out with radios; call-outs being read over the radio pedal system; expanding to several radio channels in response to increasing demand, and a telephone service. Before computers, details were written on a card and put on a conveyor belt to go to dispatch; large boards kept track of jobs.

Over the decades many initiatives were put into place. In the 1930s, a school safety program; courses on first aid; and driver safety were instituted. Lobbying to ban horse drawn vehicles especially on major routes began as they were holding up the traffic. During the war years, women trained to maintain and drive heavy vehicles; road patrols used bicycles to save on petrol. In the 50s, the NRMA advocated improving road conditions to help curb the rising road death toll; better signage to alleviate traffic congestion; school crossings with lights. The campaigns continued for practical driving courses for school students;



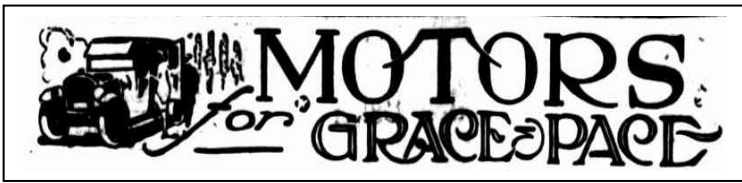
introduction of speed zones; the need to conserve Australia's crude oil resources; safer roads; cleaner car emissions; and the sponsorship of CareFlight, established in 1986. The new century has witnessed continued promotion of road safety; and diversification into ownership of ferry transport and holiday parks.

Going back to the 1920s, the NRMA encouraged tourism by setting up motor camps for members. The Open Road magazine was first published in 1921, featuring stories about towns, scenery, enjoying the bush. Practical tips were given to campers such as "Meat should be wrapped in muslin and hung up in the shade of a tree out of the reach of animals. A little vinegar sprinkled on the muslin will protect it from flies and insects". Camps were basic by today's standards; - a site could be booked to put up a canvas tent, light a fire, relax and enjoy the outdoors. As cars were still an expensive item, some put up a dividing wall in tents to protect their cars from the weather. As car ownership grew, more people began to go on road trips. Many camps were owned or leased by the NRMA providing amenities, milk, supplies, boiled water. At Christmas time, prizes were organized for sports, games, best tents. 200 acres had been purchased at Mannering Park on Lake Macquarie; but was assessed as overpriced and needing a better road route of access. In 1928 NRMA successfully experimented with a park that supplied erected tents – Loughlin Park, Cattai; then progressed to camps with auto cabins.



Central Camp Wamberal

Source: NRMA



This regular column in the Newcastle Sun, carried NRMA reports. In 1925 **Newcastle** was selected to be the first district branch outside the Sydney area. It was seen as an honour to be the first centre for the extension of activities and was celebrated with

a civic welcome and luncheon. It was expected that the example would soon be followed in other country centres all over the state. After 15 months Newcastle branch had 1600 members was the strongest in the state; and a fourth guide was appointed to be stationed permanently for the Cessnock District. The condition of the road was taking its toll on vehicles and drivers. March 1927 "... APPEAL FROM WISEMAN'S: Recently a member of the NRMA proceeding along the main northern road north of Wiseman's Ferry had the ill luck to strike serious trouble in mountainous isolated country. It was impossible for him to effect the necessary repairs and he was obliged to remain with his car almost a whole day before any other motorist happened along. Being a member of the NRMA, the motorist in trouble asked the other who was proceeding north to telephone from the closest telephone office the facts of his case, with an appeal for help. On receipt of the message, Guido Mills, one of the NRMA patrol men now permanently established in Newcastle, set out with the necessary replacements and a supply of food. After several hours of rough going for over 60 miles, he reached the broken down car..."

After crossing the Hawkesbury River on the punt at Wisemans..."a reconditioned surface is met on the way to Mangrove Creek...on beginning the climb up Mangrove Mountain – steep grade with rough surface – but the remainder of the distance to Gosford the road is generally fair to good (gravel), with worn patches approaching Gosford. Hard metal road (good) is run over to Wyong, but beyond, through Catherine Hill Bay and Swansea to Newcastle, the worn and very pot-hole road makes motoring unpleasant....." *Newcastle Sun, July 1927.*

In **Swansea**, Henry Tegg (Estate Agent) bought Wilfred Crittendell's blacksmiths business in 1925. In 1938 son, Noel Tegg, inherited the business and operated a garage - mechanical repairs; selling petrol (on Mandarin Restaurant site). He then relocated to the site next to Stamms, the newsagents, near the hotel, where he operated as an independent. He became the local NRMA agent. It became Shell. Claude Hardy delivered bread for his father William who operated Hardy's Bake House after taking up the Croft Bakery lease, Main St Swansea. Claude enlisted in the armed forces in WW2 and trained as a motor mechanic. In 1950 he built the service station in Lake Road – (the site of the present Seddon mechanical repairs and mobility shop – previously the NRMA agency.) The site was originally part of the land that had been gifted to Claude's wife Rita (nee Wagner). The Hardys took on selling motor vehicles in conjunction with selling fuel and mechanical repairs. They lived in a double garage at the rear of the property. It was an independent garage, which later became a BP. Don Benson bought the business and continued with repairs and the sale of fuel for many years. It became the NRMA agency.



Lake Rd Service Station, 1950; pre NRMA



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WE WOULD LOVE TO HEAR YOUR IDEAS FOR MORE HERITAGE STORIES!!!