

**7.1 LMM 26/04/2023 - 150<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT IN WALLSEND**

**MOTION:**

That City of Newcastle:

1. Acknowledges that 2024 marks 150 years since Wallsend became a municipality in 1874 following its gazettal by then-Premier Sir Henry Parkes.
2. Acknowledges the Indigenous traditional custodians of the land now known as Wallsend, notes their sovereignty has never been ceded and recognises the ongoing research and commitment to celebrate and elevate the rich culture and history of traditional Aboriginal owners of the land.
3. Notes the significant contribution that Wallsend has made to the City of Newcastle and the broader region through the coal mining industry and the many contributions by members of the community in areas such as music, politics, sport and incredible bravery in the armed forces.
4. Provides support and financial assistance to the community of Wallsend to prepare for their planned celebratory events marking this historic occasion.
5. Congratulates the people of Wallsend on this proud occasion and looks forward to working with the community to mark 150 years of municipal government in Wallsend.

**BACKGROUND:**

**'Wallsend Proud - Then and Now' reveals amazing stories of town's past**

**By Mike Scanlon  
July 26 2019**

AUTHOR Cath Chegwidden loves unearthing the past and being an historical detective. She also loves Wallsend. That much is obvious. Why else would you devote the past three years to researching the often neglected history of the suburb jokingly referred to as 'World's End' by some back in the 1960s?

"I'm very ashamed I hadn't been aware of what a fascinating place Wallsend is until recently," Chegwidden, of Cardiff, says.

After several previous published books, Chegwidden admits she stumbled almost by accident into a treasure trove of forgotten historical material on the old coal mining township.

Once her interest was aroused, there was no turning back. Now, she is about to publish the fruits of her research, along with 850 photographs she has had scanned, for a hefty book called *Wallsend Proud - Then and Now*, hopefully to be available in late October.

"Uncovering the suburb's past has been so serendipitous. The most amazing things have turned up. Wallsend has bragging rights," she says.



"Did you know that Wallsend as a busy mining town around 1859 was bigger than early Newcastle? For many years it was also said Wallsend was the second biggest town in the state next to Sydney," Chegwidden claims.

"Newcastle didn't really take off until BHP started (in 1915). Wallsend had 7500 miners with their wives and children living in the district. There were 40 hotels in a two square mile area, even a pub in a tent. Imagine that. Nearby Minmi had 11 hotels." Chegwidden said Wallsend district also had its share of brushes with bushrangers, including on the site of today's Federal Park, and also near Summerhill.

Two settlers, the Clarke brothers, fought with bushrangers at the Clarke homestead, 'Lemongrove Farm' in 1842. In the dark, however, one brother mortally wounded his brother accidentally.

"And we may not even have had the Sydney Harbour Bridge if it wasn't for a Wallsend man, John Estell, a former Mayor of Wallsend in 1891 and 1901 who became State Minister for Labour and Industry," she says.

"It was Estell who recruited John Bradfield, who was born in Sandgate, Queensland, to become the Chief Engineer for the NSW Department of Public Works. He knew he was a genius engineer and the bridge was finally built as an economic stimulus. But when bridge construction was about to start, there'd been a change of government and Estell was gone.

"The new NSW works minister, however, had Estell join him on the shovel at the first turning of the sod in a symbolic acknowledgement of his contribution to the project." Hundreds of goats once also had to be culled from what is nicknamed Goat (or Conn) Hill.

It's behind the Wallsend McDonald's area. Later, motorbike scrambles took place there on this bare, devastated hill in 1935.

Chegwidden also writes about the fierce rivalry once between the former Plattsburg and Wallsend villages ("built a mile apart") and when steam train and tram lines (pictured) once ran in the suburb up into the 1940s.

Amalgamating in 1915, the new Wallsend council with 15 aldermen made it the largest municipal council in Australia.

"More surprising finds kept coming up the more I delved deeper into Wallsend history. It's wonderfully rich. On the sporting side of things, my research shows the first AFL games played in NSW were played in Wallsend in the late 1800s."

Chegwidden said most people also might not realise that Wallsend had not one, but two, Victoria Cross recipients from World War I. One was Private William Curry, a miner's son, and the other was Captain Clarence Jeffries.

Less well known perhaps was that Jeffries was accompanied by Sgt James Bruce who held the unofficial role of protector of the younger man on behalf of his family.

Both men enlisted in the 34th Battalion and fought closely together until Jeffries was killed in action. As revenge, a broken James Bruce carried out countless ruthless raids against the enemy, even being nicknamed "the ginger haired devil" by Germans until being killed by an artillery shell in 1918.

"Another surprising find was the wartime story of violinist David Burt who'd been a child musical prodigy. He first served with the British Light Horse in France, entertaining his comrades in the trenches with his violin," she says.

"Later he became an aviator, becoming known over time as 'The Flying Violinist', but he had a plane crash while on an early bombing raid on Germany. He was paralysed for 16 months, losing the use of both arms.

"Up in London while recovering, he was clipped by a train and the use of both hands returned. During World War II he also served in the Middle East and died in 1954.

"Dr Edward Tyrrell was also an extraordinary musician and gifted composer. Born in Cooks Hill, he spent most of his life in Wallsend.

"One of his compositions was published for our departing WWI soldiers. It was called *Now is the Hour*. New Zealand's Maoris then claimed it after he toured over there and called it *The Maori's Farewell*. Wallsend's Tyrrell Street is named after him. These are some of the jewels I've uncovered in my research while debunking a lot of local myths."

Chegwidden said her interest in Wallsend really began while researching the history of Wallsend Presbyterian Church to celebrate its 150th anniversary in 2017. She said she started to uncover links with colourful people and historic events. Apparently nothing had been published about the township's overall social history since 1953.

A former creative and performing arts head teacher (until medically retired from a car accident), Chegwidden realised there was a unique opportunity to supply a book that would give a focus for families to come together to share their histories.

A typical example might be the book's cover. It features young workers from Wallsend McDonald's on McHappy Day posing in Wallsend sporting colours (red and white) in similar poses to miners at 'A' Pit in an old photo.

"The fast food outlet is the site of Wallsend's 'A' Pit, later renamed the Elermore Pit. Things change. The nearby Wallsend Plaza site was once the Crystal Palace Soccer Ground," she says.

"And all the parks in Wallsend way, way back, were made into 'reservoirs' as a way of controlling flood water away from buildings. That's why Wallsend is a township of bridges: our Venice of the west."

Easy to read, lavishly illustrated in colour and filled with extraordinary detail about Wallsend, the 250-page hard cover, self-published book, *Wallsend Proud* (to probably sell for \$50), is an immense achievement by the author. It deserves to sell well.

As Chegwidden told me: "Poor Wallsend has always missed out over time and my story just tries to do justice to its story."

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

1. New South Wales Government Gazette, 2 January 1874.
2. "*Wallsend's Municipal Jubilee*", Newcastle Morning Herald and Miner's Advocate, 22 April 1924.
3. Correspondence from Wallsend Heritage Group Inc.



NEW SOUTH WALES

# Government Gazette.

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY.

No. 1.]

FRIDAY, 2 JANUARY.

[1874.

[2887]

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Sydney, 31st December, 1873.

**H**IS Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, has been pleased to appoint

**Mr. ROBERT NEIL M'DIARMID**

to be a Clerk in the Department of the Auditor General, from the 4th November last, vice M'Kern, promoted.

**HENRY PARKES.**

## MUNICIPAL INSTITUTIONS.

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Sydney, 6th October, 1873.

### PETITION FOR MUNICIPALITY, GULGONG.

**H**IS Excellency the Governor with the advice of the Executive Council, directs the publication, in accordance with the Municipalities Act of 1867, of the substance and prayer of a Petition addressed to His Excellency, and signed by two hundred and seventy-five persons, praying that their locality therein described may be erected into a Municipality under the name of the "Borough of Gulgong."

**HENRY PARKES.**

The Petitioners state that they are desirous of the establishment of a Municipality under the name of the "Municipality of Gulgong." That upon incorporation they would be liable to be assessed for municipal rates.

That the population of the district proposed to be incorporated is over four thousand.

That the boundaries proposed are as follow:—"On the south from the south-easterly point of Samuel A. Blackman's 40 acre lot No. 576, at Cooyal Creek, by a line bearing west to the eastern bank of the Cudgegong River; on the west by the Cudgegong River at Cooyal or Reedy Creek to the north-west corner of the Government Village Reserve; and thence on the north by a line bearing east to Cooyal Creek, west side; and on the east to Cooyal Creek to the starting."

That the name proposed for the incorporated district is the "Municipality of Gulgong."

And the Petitioners pray "that Your Excellency may be pleased to take the premises into favourable consideration, and incorporate the district within the boundaries we have indicated."

[The Signatures to the above Petition will be found in Gazette No. 229, of 1873, page 2,745.]

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Sydney, 28th October, 1873.

### PETITION FOR MUNICIPALITY, WALLSEND.

**H**IS Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, directs the publication, in accordance with the Municipalities Act of 1867, of the substance and prayer of a Petition addressed to His Excellency, and signed by two hundred and seventy-three persons, praying that their locality therein described may be erected into a Municipality, under the name of the "Borough of Wallsend."

**HENRY PARKES.**

The Petitioners state that they are inhabitants of Wallsend, Plattsburg, Brookestown, and Pit Town, which they are desirous may be declared a Municipal Borough, under the name and title of the "Borough of Wallsend."

The boundaries of the proposed Municipality are—"Commencing at the south-east boundary-stone of the Wallsend Coal Company's estate and Steel's 80 acres, being the east end of the Wallsend and Newcastle Road, adjoining the Lambton Municipality's road, through Steel's 80 acres, bearing north one hundred and twenty (120) chains; then bearing west two hundred and forty (240) chains; then bearing south two hundred and forty (240) chains; then bearing east two hundred and forty (240) chains; then bearing north one hundred and twenty (120) chains to point of commencement, including an area of nine square miles, having four equal sides of three miles each."

The population is over four thousand. And the Petitioners "humbly pray that their request may receive your favourable consideration."

[The Signatures to the above Petition will be found in Gazette No. 248, of 1873, page 2981.]

Colonial Secretary's Office,  
Sydney, 8th December, 1873.

### PETITION FOR MUNICIPALITY, BRAIDWOOD.

**H**IS Excellency the Governor, with the advice of the Executive Council, directs the publication, in accordance with the Municipalities Act of 1867, of the substance and prayer of a Petition addressed to His Excellency, and signed by one hundred and forty-four persons, praying that their locality therein described may be erected into a Municipality under the name of the "Borough of Braidwood."

**HENRY PARKES.**

*Legis Assembly*



# **WALLSEND HERITAGE GROUP INC**

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Dear Councillors,

Wallsend Heritage Group would like to draw your attention to the fact that 2024 marks the 150th anniversary of the proclamation of the Municipality of Wallsend.

We believe that such a significant, albeit little known, event deserves some sort of commemoration. We would suggest that an exhibition of historic photographs of Wallsend, probably in Wallsend Library and perhaps around the time of the Wallsend Winter Fair would be appropriate.

Such a display might be a suitable occasion to advertise the new of the Wallsend Heritage App to interested visitors.

As such an event would take some planning, we hope we are giving the library plenty of notice to arrange things.

Kind regards,

Geoff Hassall  
Secretary