

Step Back In Time Gathering Eungella's Past

Eungella Hall

Meeting Held at Mackay Tourism, Nebo Road

Date 26th April 2009

People present: Ted & Agnes Keast, Cedric & Maureen Swayne, Graeme & Robyn Ware, Charlie & Monica Linklater, Maurie Howie, Graham & Connie Patterson, Pam Faux & Del Cunningham.

Ted: Dudley was in on it from day one.

Agnes: Not really he only arrived in 1947. We only got married in 1947 and they came up there then.

Maurie: Actually they came to our place in 1946 then they went away, they weren't married then, then they got married in 1947 and came back.

Ted: I think it was in 1946 and I'm sure Dudley and Norma were there then. He had an old Ford tilly they used to go down to the quarry load it up with metal and bring it up the range. He was there just before me.

Charlie: What was the hall originally, it was an army building.

Maurie: Yes it was an old Army hospital at the Harbour. Berniece Wright could authenticate this.

Pam: How did Eungella acquire that hall

Maurie: That was done by my Dad, Bill & Hump Ward, Tom Lewis. It was done by the RSL. The army owned it and made it easy for the RSL to get their hands on it. They loaded it onto a truck and took it to Eungella, but can't remember whose truck it was. It was taken up for the RSL for a Memorial Hall for all the people who had gone to war and not come back and for those who had gone to war and returned to enjoy.

Charlie: Maurie's father then used it for a Masonic Lodge. They used to store their gear in a room on the left of the hall and set it up in the main section for their lodge.

Maurie: As the boys came home from war, they were all allocated RSL membership – it was Dad's job to do this .

Charlie: Doug Mollenhagen was included in those who returned from the war.

Graham: I did National Service. There is a book out with every serviceman from Eungella & Crediton, noted if they were KIA or wounded. But you would have to go to RSL to see it.

Maurie: Maybe you could get more information off the internet.

Graeme: A couple of years ago, the RSL wanted me to put a book together for them, but the information they gave me was just reams and reams of minutes. Some important info could be mixed up with those minutes. The minutes go back a long, long way. Brisbane will have it all.

Maurie: At least you'd have some names in there.

Maurie: My dad was in the first WW. In the second WW, my dad was a recruiting officer for Eungella. Dad would not allow my two older brothers to join, so they both went down to Brisbane to my Uncle and enlisted there. Bill was 18, Jack 19. Both went together. Through the internet I discovered that Bill put his age up to 19 so he could join.

Pam: My dad was 16.

Pam: When the builder did this hall, did the community help out.?

Maurie: Dad spent a lot of his time up there, he was a bush carpenter, but the builder built it with help from others. I'm sure there were quite a few who helped. The builders were Wally Malinsky and his son in law. Les Pitt built a few houses around the place and Harold Petersen's uncle (Andy Petersen) helped him, but I don't think he worked on the church.

Graham: DPI did a thing up there and Ken Burgess should have lots of info. They lived on the top of the hill and it is still a mining lease (Rio Tinto). They dug down and found gold, but it was too hard to get it out.

Maurie: The original lighting plant for the hall was a Whitson Lighting Plant which was battery operated. It got to be a pain in the butt, because no one looked after the battery.

Charlie: It was Les Loynes' job to start up the lighting plant. I was secretary of the lodge for 14 years.

Maurie: After a while they changed the plant and put a DC straight through.

Charlie: Originally, in 1952 the first Masonic Lodge used candles. Maurie's father was the first Worshipful Master. I was initiated in Eungella Lodge. We used to go down to

Finch Hatton and then we started our own chapter. There was an installation each year and it was a big deal. Monica, being the Secretary's wife copped the load of providing afternoon tea. The ladies had to have a marquee outside as they were not allowed in the hall – it was secret men's business. The lodge was famous for their 'coffee royal'. It consisted of a can of milk which was stood in a copper of hot water and then coffee and 1 bottle of Rum was added and it was stirred with a broom handle.

Del: Do you remember an old wood stove in the Hall, and when it was removed?

Maurie: The wood stove was well used in the kitchen. When did we stop using that Ted?

Ted: It was after the power went on in 1961 and I went to town and got a lot of old fluro lights and Jimmy Jeffries who had a farm and was a preacher from Dalrymple Heights and myself put them in. We also bought an electric stove and put it in then as well.

Maurie: I can remember lighting that old stove up to put the pies in for when the movies were finished. I would have it on low and the pies were ready after the show.

Del: When did they stop having movies there. We came up in 1956 and there were no movies going on then.

Charlie: I remember going out to the Dam, but not at Eungella Hall.

Maurie: When the movies were in full swing, Jack Brodie was the operator and I was his helper. (The projection room is now the men's toilet.) I remember at times, the hero and the heroine were about to kiss and the film would break, then Jack would cut a piece out of it, join it and start it up again and we would see the hero riding off on his horse. What a let down! You could hear the groans from the audience.

Graeme: That is what they call censoring.

Ted: They had to have the hall engine to make the movies go. There was a part missing, so Hump Ward went to town to get the part, but I was going out somewhere and I did not have time to fix it, so I was not too popular at that time. Originally they got a grant from the Bank for the projector etc. The Bank foreclosed on them - Harold Petersen and Kaj Sprogoe had a hand in it. It looked like Harold was the more likely person to pay, so they sued him for the money owed. We had to run functions for quite a while to help Harold pay the debt.

Pam: When did it become a Community Hall?

Ted: Not long before 1961, the community took it over. We extended the kitchen and later we got a bit of money and put new iron on the roof, put a tank and a septic toilet for the ladies.

Agnes: We had the first church services under the school, then we moved into the room on the side of the main part of the hall until the church was built. We had to go up the side steps.

Charlie: The best night of the year in the hall was the Race Ball. After all day at the Picnic Races, we had a huge night until 2am.

Maurie: The races were wiped out because of some racing rules, we could no longer have amateur races. Jimmy Clews was riding a horse around the track and it went bush. Jimmy was unconscious for about 4 weeks and the horse was found 4 days later by Eddie McEvoy with the saddle under his belly. Alf Clews and I had to make sure the horse paddock was fully fenced before the races. The fences were always flat and it was quite a job.

Monica: I remember Robyn as a small child in a little white dress at the races. It had been burnt.

Maurie: George Bosel probably dropped a match.

Monica: Errol Comerford kept kicking up the dust and you should have seen how black Robyn's dress was.

Pam: When was the hall used as a church?

Agnes: The church services were in the hall until about 1947, then the church was built. It was the Presbyterian ministry. The catholics also had services in the main section of the hall.

Graham: Kevin Crouther has info on what ministers were there and lots more. The Ministers always lived in the house on the hill where Alf Clews lived. Ted Slide built it and he was a good builder, but very slow.

Cedric: Ted worked at Finch Hatton Mill and he would walk down to work on a Monday and back on the Friday.

Robyn: Graeme put the ladies septic in the hall in 1971. He put quite a few septic in at the time. When Len Coben asked him to put one in at the shop he said he could not as he was not a plumber, however the Shire inspector came and looked at it and said it was a really good job and he gave permission for Graeme to do it. However, when the Caravan Park was starting up, they asked him to do theirs, but a plumber came up and that was the end of Graeme doing this job.

Other uses for the hall – Fete Days, Baby Shows, Injection clinics, shows like hypnotists and singers. Dances all the time.

Charlie: Crediton was the best section of all. There were dances and tennis on Sundays.

Maurie: Not as good as the top, it was better.

Del: I remember going to tennis at Crediton one Sunday and there were only two of us 'top' girls and a fairly large group of Crediton girls. For some reason they resented us being there and took to us. They really pummeled us. We did not feel really welcome.

Maurie: No beer inside the halls in those days. We had to have it outside under a tree or in the boot of the car.

Monica: It was annoying because we came to dance and all the men would be outside drinking.

Maurie: It was better at Finch Hatton because the pub shut at 10pm. I had time to dance with all the girls before 10 o'clock and then all the other guys would come back and ruin my fun.

Robyn: I remember Dad going to the pub and coming back to the hall and fairly swinging mum around the floor.

Monica: It was a real hard trip home some nights in the thick fog. I would have my head out one window with a torch and Charlie would have his head out the other side.

Maurie: Then they put cats eyes on the range which helped heaps. Before it was bitumened, the gravel was light and you could see the road easier.

Charlie: Dean Ross wanted me to drive him down to the Rail motor and we got down to the quarry and there was a sapling on the road. I decided not to go over the sapling, but if I had driven over it I would have ended over the side.

Pam: Has anyone got any photos?

Ted: I have some.

Connie: Mrs Steele might, Betty Burgess may have some. Cedric Swayne gave me 13 photos to scan. Jimmy Goode's Store. Shifted for Billy Edwards home and now owned by Ralph & Sue-ellen Florer.

Cedric: Harry Leach and Tom Lee built the two storey place for us in 1933.

