ST ALBANS & MACDONALD VALLEY
HAWKESBURY LIBRARY SERVICE - LOCAL STUDIES FACT SHEET

Background History

Hawkesbury Library's Local Studies Collection contains a unique collection of material reflecting all aspects of the Hawkesbury district. The Macdonald valley covers the area around St. Albans as well as the Macdonald River which was originally known as the First Branch or Lower Branch. Those wishing to travel north to Wollombi and the Hunter often travelled through this district. St. Albans was officially named in 1841. One of the important features of the district is the St. Albans Common which was established in 1853.
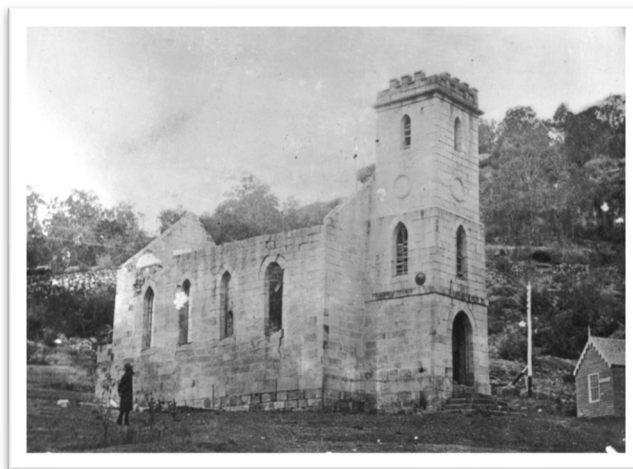
Access to the district was originally by river until regular flooding resulted in the river silting up and becoming shallower, and later by road however it has always been an isolated location. Several bridges have been constructed providing access across the river including the well-known truss bridge designed by De Burgh and opened in 1903. Some of the recognisable pioneer names of the valley are the Jurd, Fernance, Sternbeck, Walter and Morris families.

St. Albans is famous for the Settlers Arms Inn which is now the only licensed hotel left in the district. The two storey stone building was constructed by John Sullivan and is one of the focal points of the town. The Court House was established in the 1850s but it was damaged by floods and another was built on higher ground.

The area was serviced by a number of schools including denominational schools, private schools and government funded schools. There have been numerous church established throughout the valley. St Joseph's Catholic Church was completed in the mid-1840s but never had the population to support such a large structure. It was gutted by bushfire in 1898. Other churches included the Our Lady of Loretto and the Methodist Chapel.

Photographs

The library has a large collection of Hawkesbury Images however very few on the Macdonald Valley. To maintain and increase the relevance of this valuable community resource, the Library attempts to acquire copies of material relating to the local area. This includes items such as brochures, leaflets, fliers, annual reports, newsletters, maps, ephemera as well as photographs, slides, videos and publications. The Library is always seeking photographs of the district. As well as historic photographs, we are very interested in images of the more recent past. Photographs of community events such as fetes, seminars and street parades. Class photographs are always significant. Images can provide a fascinating amount of material, sometimes not found in any other source. The Library has the facilities to copy photographs on the spot and we can also make a visit. Also of interest are slides, videos and home movies.

Church ruin, Macdonald Valley. Courtesy Hawkesbury Library Service.

Hawkesbury Newspapers online

One of the best resources for family and local history are newspapers. The Hawkesbury Library sponsored local available newspapers covering 1840s to 1960s from our collection to be digitised. These are available to access for free online at as part of the Australian Newspaper Digitisation Program on TROVE http://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper Newspapers can be searched, original digitised pages viewed for free as well as the transcript online. This is an excellent resource and includes city and regional papers for all over Australia as well as the Sydney Morning Herald, Sydney Gazette and NSW Government Gazette. They are updated and added to regularly.

Church, cemetery & directories

Some church and cemetery inscriptions are held, check the catalogue for a complete list
Macdonald Valley 1885, 1891, 1900 Musters RLP BOOK 88
St. Albans Anglicans Births 1831-1934, Marriages 1831- 1937 and Deaths 1831- 1907 RLP BOOK 72
See also the Hawkesbury on the Net website - Cemetery Register www.hawkesbury.net.au/cemetery

Publications

The Ferry The Branch The creek: Aspects of Hawkesbury History RL994.42 FER
The forgotten valley : history of the Macdonald Valley and St. Albans / Hutton Neve RL994.41HUT
St. Albans and the MacDonald Valley / Bailey RL994.41 BAI
Catastrophic channel changes in the Macdonald Valley 1949-1955 / Henry RLP MAC
Ceremony report for the centenary plaquing of St. Albans Bridges, Macdonald River, NSW on Saturday 28 June 2003 for Saturday 27 June 1903 / Fraser RL725.98099441 FRA
Hawkesbury River History / Dharug & Lower Hawkesbury Historical Society RL994.42 HAW
Norton Bridge: the bridge over the Macdonald River at St. Albans / Wood R725.98099441 WOO
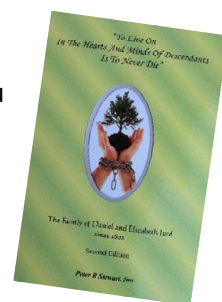
Conservation plans

Conservation plans usually have preamble or brief history for contextual information and usually very helpful. These ones are online and should have some useful information:

- Planning for the protection of scenic landscapes : the Macdonald Valley - a case study (1982) https://heritagensw.intersearch.com.au/heritagenswjspui/retrieve/bbf62b50-cacb-402c-8c7e-723e70a44ae8/H04042%20-%20PLAN.pdf
- St Joseph's Church ruins https://heritagensw.intersearch.com.au/heritagenswjspui/retrieve/8b4790e4-b3e2-4bc9-ac01-3276e8f549a0/H07703%20-%20STJO.pdf
- Price Morris cottage https://heritagensw.intersearch.com.au/heritagenswjspui/retrieve/5004ebcb-67b4-472c-b78b-58164a5ecde3/H06068%20-%20FINA.pdf
- Macdonald River valley, Colo River Valley: cemeteries study : final report 1991 online https://heritagensw.intersearch.com.au/heritagenswjspui/retrieve/0fbb2027-0574-4173-91f4-10daae2ce615/H00903%20-%20MACD.pdf

Family histories

We have a vast collection of family histories and are keen to add additional information. If you have undertaken family history research on Hawkesbury families, you can submit copies by post, in person, electronically and by email. Many of the families are recorded in our pamphlet file under their surname, Bailey, Walker, Thompson., Fernance, Sternbeck, Walter and Morris Others have published and unpublished books including:

- Jurd family: To live on in the hearts & minds of descendants is to never die / Stewart RL929.20994 JUR
- Daniel family: James & Mary Daniel, Central Macdonald & St Albans NSW / McNeill RL929.20994 DAN
- Bailey & Fernance family history (Prosser, Walters & Green) of the Hawkesbury, MacDonald River & St. Albans district / compiled by Mrs Erina Wood RL929.20994 BAI
- From branch to belt: story of Matthew Pearson Thompson of St. Albans / Thompson RL929.20994 THO

Other material
St. Albans Common Trust archives / St Albans Common Trustees
This includes material such Correspondence; herdsman's book; Minute books; list of commoners and other material. Check catalogue for full listing https://aurora.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library/
APPOINTMENT NEEDED TO VIEW

Maps
- A wide selection of topographical, historical and Parish maps are held, including the following. NSW Parish maps can also be viewed online at https://www.nswlrs.com.au/Parish-and-Historical-Maps
- Survey of St. Albans Common, 1849 RLM H89
- Town of St. Albans and adjoining lands, Parish of St. Albans RLM P11

  Other maps can be located online as follows:
- State Library of NSW including subdivision plans https://guides.sl.nsw.gov.au/maps/subdivision_plans
- Land Registry Service including Parish maps https://www.nswlrs.com.au/Parish-and-Historical-Maps
- Surveyor General records including Sketchbooks https://www.records.nsw.gov.au/archives/collections-and-research/guides-and-indexes/surveyor-general-guide

Section of St Albans Parish map. Courtesy Land Registry Service

Court Records

St Albans Court House operated in the 1850s. St Albans Court of Petty Sessions within the Windsor Police District was created in 1858 and remained in use until 1933. The records were moved to Wisemans Ferry Court of Petty Sessions and some of these are held by State Records see https://search.records.nsw.gov.au/permalink/f/1ebnd1l/ORGANISATIONS1002827 In the 1890s a Court House building was constructed in St. Albans, replacing an earlier building which was damaged by floods. This building now operates as a Bed & Breakfast.

Former Court House and Police Station, St Albans circa 1980s by Joy Stevens

Fact sheets

The Library has a number of fact sheet that includes some of the sources available in our Local Studies Collection at https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/library/services/local-and-family-history-resources/research-guides In particular see:

Local History https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0005/194558/LSFS-Local-History.pdf
Maps https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0011/85727/LSFS-maps.pdf
Trove https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0013/221107/LSFS-Trove-Research.pdf
Historical newspapers https://www.hawkesbury.nsw.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0019/85402/Historical-newspapers.pdf

Websites

The following websites have some useful information:
Dictionary of Sydney https://dictionaryofsydney.org/natural_feature/macdonald_river_gunanday and https://dictionaryofsydney.org/place/st_albans
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Macdonald_River_(St_Albans)
Convict Trail Project https://www.convicttrail.com.au/history.html
Great North Road https://paulbuddehistory.com/bucketty/the-convict-era/

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