

Glen Innes Heritage Recognised: The Recipe and the Ingredients

David Donnelly

Firstly, turn back the clock some thirty years to a time when rural communities in New South Wales were taking the brunt of State Government service rationalisation. It was a time when it was necessary to try to restrict the impact of the loss of railway services, relocation of State Forestry jobs to the coast, and the list goes on.

To the community of Glen Innes it appeared that we were under siege and as the Mayor of the Municipality of Glen Innes at the time, there was an urgent need for a strategy. This strategy would on the one hand need to fight off the onslaught and on the other develop long term positive options for growth. I believe that it is fair to say that the enthusiasm for a long term solution would not have had the same commitment had it not been for the pressure for survival.

Various meetings identified our opportunities and resources needed to create a result. We identified the New England National Highway as a very significant opportunity. We just needed a reason for the thousands of travellers to turn off the highway, just once. Another area which probably seemed unrelated was our lack of a common theme to promote our town to the wider community and also to give a basis for a greater sense of unity.

Every opportunity was explored with mixed success, until early one Sunday morning I had a call from local pharmacist, John Tregurtha saying:

Macca on Australia All Over is talking about a pile of rocks that Scotland wants to give to Australia as a gift for our Bi-Centenary in 1988. The rocks are put together as a Cain and of great significance. Apparently no one wants it. What about you get on the phone and let them know that we'll have them.

That was the beginning to much rivalry between the most Scottish towns around New South Wales. There was no dispute; Glen Innes had many credentials when it came to our connections with Celtic origins. Everywhere place names related to distant Scotland, Ireland and Wales.

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Cornish miners were key to the development of Emmaville mining and family names reflected ancestral roots.

TV crews descended on Glen Innes and we were on the map for our cultural connections. We held Ceilidhs, dual named streets with Gaelic translations, and promoted our credentials far and wide. We lost that war to Mosman (where the Bi-centennial Cain was erected) and Maclean erected their own Cain, but it opened the doors with the Celtic Council of Australia and through the support and dedication of Peter Alexander as the Chair we had another opportunity.

Peter Alexander had many discussions with myself, Lex Ritchie and others about his grand idea. The proposal for the Australian Standing Stones was unique and gave the potential to realise three of our community's key goals:

an identity and point of focus that set us apart from so many similar communities.

a basis of common identity to unit our community.

a means to develop tourism potential and give reason for travellers to turn east for at least a short while.

The road to success against competition for the establishment of the Australian Standing Stones brought about another round of understanding with other towns. As a result of this 'friendly rivalry' over the years, our community has been able to develop our relationship with other communities. Mosman and Glen Innes now have a 'Friendship Agreement' and Maclean and Glen Innes enjoy a sense of common purpose.

It seemed that to get ahead of the pack we needed to go the extra mile, thus my wife Kathy and I set off half way around the globe to the island of Kearstay. Travelling through England to the Orkney Islands and selecting The Ring of Brodgar as the basis for the Glen Innes Array was an experience not to forget. It's now history that we won the race and the Australian Standing Stones were built.

The commanding position within Centennial Parklands overlooking the town had already been firmly secured as the site for the location of the Standing Stones. The Committee were now in a position to refine the initial design work. There was a desire to make these Standing Stones unique to Australia, yet maintaining a connection with those ancient relics. The Australian Standing Stones symbolises man's reliance on nature and the need for mankind to work with the seasons.

Overlays included in the Australian Standing Stones plan included:

- The Southern Cross
- The compass points

- The Christian Cross
- Solstice bearings

Following the success of our proposal, we now had to realise on our submission to the Celtic Council and build 'The Australian Standing Stones'. Our committee was consolidated and it was most important that it be led by a person with the capacity to promote the project within the community. With this in mind, I was pleased to have John Tregurtha accept the role. The Committee members brought with them a wide range of experience including Ian MacDonald as the surveyor, Council engineer Peter Harvey, Lex Ritchie as co-ordinator and many others.



During the project development phase, we had envisaged locating sufficient numbers of pencil shaped stones with a diameter of at least one metre and a minimum height of six metres. Lex and others scoured the countryside and found some, but nowhere near enough. It was at this point that fellow Councillor George Rozynski (of Polish heritage), sometimes known as George McRozynski, proposed a solution. He suggested that if the Council would approve the purchase of a second hand compressor, hoses and jackhammer, he and fellow Councillor Bill Tyson (retired local Police Sergeant) would deliver the goods.

That was the beginning of many weeks of jackhammer work drilling 50 mm holes in large granite boulders and then filling these holes with an expansive material. George had learnt this technique soon after migrating to Australia during his work on the Snowy Mountains Scheme. After the first attempt, George came to me with a great air of disappointment, saying that despite waiting the desired time the boulders had failed to

split. The next day George returned saying that they had success and thus began their regular journeys into the bush cutting rocks.

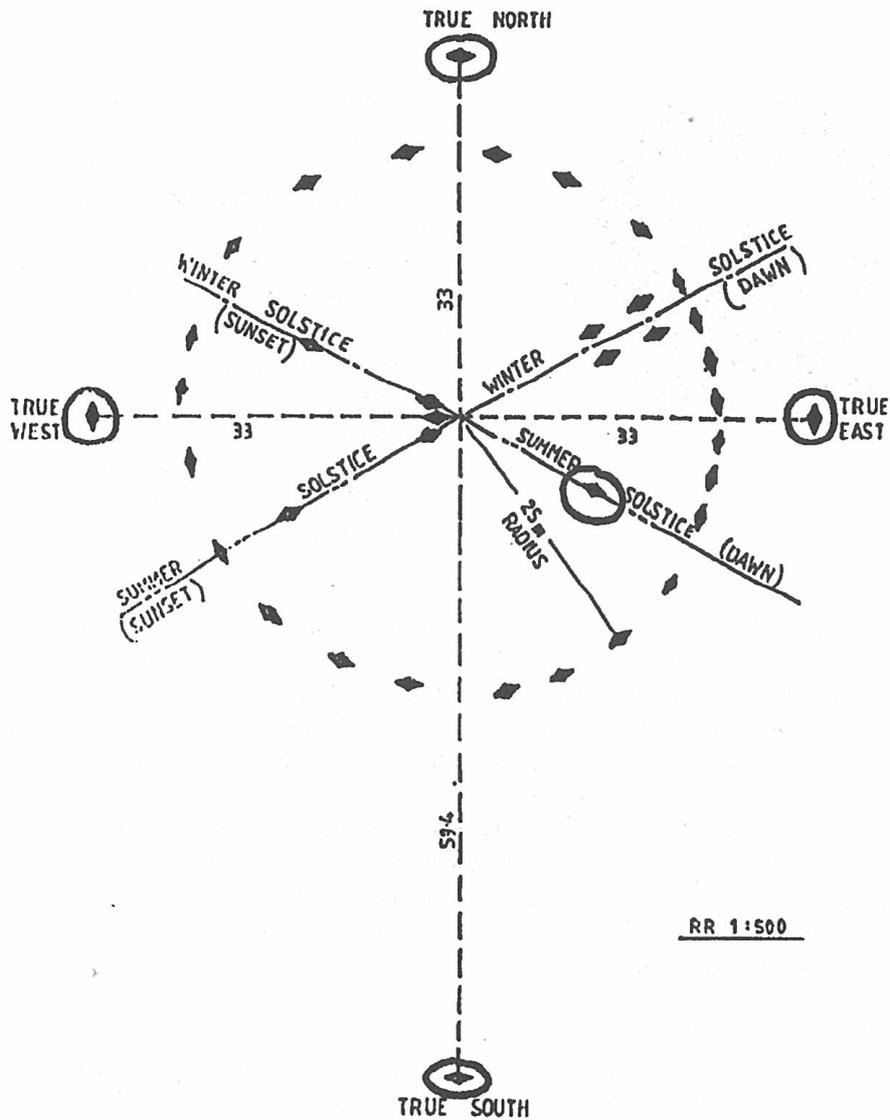
The next hurdle for the team was to somehow transport these massive twenty plus tonne objects to the Standing Stones site. This is where two other committee members of the team came to the fore. Ted Nowlan, local long distance transport operator, said he would cart them if we could get them loaded. Councillor Bob Dwyer, the manager of the local sawmill offered his time and the Company's logging equipment to load the monsters. The first stone was stood under the supervision of Project Engineer, Peter Harvey using many pulley blocks and ropes hauled by the local Volunteer Rescue Squad. Engineer, Peter gave a directive that the stones were to be placed 1/3 in the ground with concrete surround to ensure absolute stability.

The enormity of the task and the cost has probably not gained sufficient headlines and it is now fair to say that this project had a resource cost running to at least \$250,000 at the time, taking into account probably a 75% volunteer component. There would be many towns that would see instant merit in writing the cheque now given the cultural and economic dividends that were accrued here.

The Official opening of The Australian Standing Stones in February 1992 by New South Wales Governor His Excellency Rear Admiral Peter Sinclair, AO, provided the foundations for the annual Celtic Festival Events held in May each year since. This event brought together the Mayors of a number of the surrounding towns and cities including: Inverell, Guyra and Tamworth, thus building unity at a regional level. Annual street parades led by our local pipe band have grown to massive proportions, many clans and representatives of Celtic Nations make the annual Celtic Festival the place for their gatherings. Each year Solstice celebrations and flag lowering ceremonies on Celtic Saints' days are held at the Standing Stones and they have become a popular location for weddings, rallies and sporting events.

A number of the original Steering Committee and Standing Stones Committee have moved to other towns, retired, or departed this life. However, quite a few remain as dedicated as ever including: John Mathew, Desne Mathew, Bob Lee, George Rozynski, Jean Thegurtha, Malcolm Parsons, Ted Nowlan, Barry Gray and Des Bowlay. The locals are strongly supported at the annual Celtic Festival by members of the Celtic Council of Australian and also a contingent from our 'Friendship Agreement' partner community, Mosman.

A recent immigrant to Glen Innes from Scotland made the comment: 'I've seen more bagpipes and kilts here than I'd ever seen back home in Scotland'. Indeed, the tradition has now been established where each Friday a piper entertains locals and tourists alike from the balcony of the



Town Hall. There are many bus tours entertained by a kilted guide providing some of the interesting highlights and attributes to the Standing Stones story. The Australian Standing Stones have been granted 'National Monument' status recognising the importance of this masterpiece as centrepiece to the contribution of the Celtic Peoples in the development of the Australian nation.

Looking back on the positive impacts of this major venture, it is fair to say that the original perceived ideals have now been recognized, as well as some possibly intangible ones:

- there is now a greater understanding and endorsement of the values of the individual's heritage, whether it be within family groups, clan groups, or more general Celtic origins;
- the annual Celtic Festival has developed without negative impacts on the other annual town festivals (Annual Agriculture Show, Beardies Festival, Minerama Gem Show, Gourmet in the Glen) and, in fact, has probably built hosting capacity in the town;
- within the annual Celtic Festival 'The Kirking of the Tartans' has gained popularity. This event is effectively an open air Christian Church for all denominations. This display of unity and 'taking the Church out of the building' is a significant step in its own right.

The development of the Australian Standing Stones came about as a result of some grand ideas together with great teamwork and a high level of dedication from the band of volunteers responsible. It provides a great sense of satisfaction to have been part of this venture in its development and now to see that others continue to build on the foundations. The community now has the ongoing benefits of what at the time appeared to be something 'Quite off the Radar' thirty years earlier.

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*New England Heritage In Verse: A Sub-committee of The Land of The
Beardies Festival Committee*

A Tribute to the Life of the Late Col Newsome

Glen Innes, 5–6 November 2011

This was the third year this event has been staged. Again there were two basic components being the heritage poetry and prose section held on Saturday, 5th November and the conventional poetry section held on Sunday 6th November. This event now has solid foundations to continue into the future.

The committee was most pleased to have the involvement of the University of New England with Associate Professor John Ryan and Doctor Thomas Bristow judging both sections. There were many very favourable comments in regard to the judging effort and the judges' commentary of each participant's work.

Researcher, Mark Duncan drove from Dubbo to participate in the event. Mark provided an interesting insight into some aspects of the life of renowned local poet, Col Newsome. Col's son, Laurie Newsome was on hand to present the various awards at the end on the event.

It was with great pleasure to receive the magnificent perpetual trophy provided by the University of New England. The imposing cup is awarded to the most outstanding heritage contribution in the Saturday section. This year the winner was Mr Tom McIlveen of Port Macquarie who had entered a series of poems including two featuring heritage within the New England area. Tom's works were read by accomplished poet, Cay Ellem. Tom is overjoyed with his win and plans to purchase a smaller replica of the cup. The second place was awarded to Terry te Velde with his prose; 'The Dutch Connection' which dealt with Terry and his families' move from the Netherlands to Australia. Third place in the event went to Maureen Halloran with her series of heritage poems.

Sunday's section commenced with the Poets' Breakfast with all sub sections providing a range of quality poetry. The winner of the perpetual shield for outstanding works was taken out by Tracey Smith.

The entries in this year's Saturday heritage event built on the high quality of the previous two years. The winning series of poems by Tom McIlveen depicted the historical impact of people and events from the last two centuries. Some of Tom's poems reflected on the era of the bushrangers and how the events of the time helped shape our social fabric. Another poem: 'The Barraba Drovers' records the times of real life characters on Bowman's Station at Barraba and beyond during severe drought years.

Tom's poem: 'Escape from Alleremba' deals with desperate times of the 1960's drought on his father's property, 'Alleremba' on The Barrington Tops north east of Nundle. The poem demonstrates the personal fallout from the extremes of nature to a rural family. Another of his, 'The Dungeon on the Hill', deals with the personal account of the strain of being taken away as a child to Saint Patricks Orphanage in Armidale. These two poems bring to light aspects of more recent history very often left unspoken or recorded. These well written accounts are now part of our New England heritage.

The second placed work presented by Terry te Velde brought about acute attention from the audience as he related his families' life story in immigrating from The Netherlands. Terry is a partner in a successful stock and station agency business in Glen Innes, a far cry from what may have been if his parents, Geert and Reika, had not chosen to immigrate from the war torn Europe.

The presentation covered glimpses of the severe difficulties the family faced in their home country during the war years including:

- Geeert's conscription into the German war effort as a truck driver in Austria
- the dreadful living conditions at the end of the war with limited road access and food shortages
- Allied food drops
- the liberation of their hometown by two Canadian soldiers
- the developing 'Cold War' in Europe.

The move to a new world in Australia in 1955 had many challenges and was quite an enlightening session as Terry related as only auctioneer Terry could of the highs and lows of those early years. This life story has now been disseminated to the wider community as a result of New England Heritage in Verse 2011. Terry may be encouraged in future years to add a taste of his challenges and achievements in becoming a stack and station agent in his travels around the state and beyond.

The third placed heritage work was a series of poems by Maureen Halloran. Maureen has been quietly writing poems and children's books for some years and these poems show a deep affinity with her chosen subjects.

The first poem, 'By the River' tells of the mining years east of Glen Innes and reflects on the hardships, the yearning for a strike and now the silence.

The second, 'The Singing Wires' reminds us of the overhead telephone wire now replaced by underground cables. The telegraph had been an integral part of bush life, not only as a means of communication but also as a bush guide, the bush Post Office providing a heart to scattered rural communities and importantly the lines had become part of the landscape. Maureen's poem not only tells of the hum of the wires, but also reminds us of recent history already forgotten and in fact unknown to new generations.

The third poem, 'I remember When' relates to Maureen's personal experience with the legendary Black Panther. This poem also provides an insight of how a young girl ventured out into the bush to trap rabbits to earn a few extra pounds to assist with the subsequent teacher training. The late evening experience starting out with the sight of a very large paw print on a rabbit burrow set the scene for an early return home. Over the decades until about thirty years ago the story of the Black Panther was often told but rarely included in print to build on local folklore.

The above is just a taste of the works that were presented with others touching on a range of heritage life including: rabbit trapping, The city teacher, Emmaville mining, Gibraltar Range road construction and wild dog trapping.

With each year of this event, the wealth of local and regional folklore is further enhanced and ultimately we will have a very good basis of a unique publication.

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In summary, Glen Innes, has revitalized its heritage, made active its latent identity and folk, folk memory and traditional culture have been synthesized splendidly. Further, all Australia's races have been enabled to come and share in a feast of lived poetry, music and spectacle in one of Australia's most Celtic of settings.

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**THIRD INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE IMAGE
14-16 September 2012**

Higher School of the Humanities and Journalism, Poznan, Poland

SPECIAL THEME: 'The Thread to the Unknown' —Is the Unknown a construct? Can we actually construct the Unknown, and if so how do we do it? This conference aims to explore the boundaries of language, culture, scientific research, artistic production and images in relation to the Unknown, in order to think about the limits of science and the future of human society. (Full conference Themes may be found at <http://ontheimage.com/ideas/themes/>).

We are pleased to hold the 2012 conference in partnership with the Polish Mediations Biennale 3. The word *mediations* also applies to the relationship between all fields of art, attitudes, outlooks on life, and generations. The Unknown - Nieznane: Works of art disclose areas which are incomprehensible and which cannot be expressed with the use of the words. We create knowledge of what is familiar to us and about the secret of our existence. Art awakens in us the sensibility and awareness of the presence of things that are unknown in our lives.

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