

WHO IS ON THE COMMITTEE?

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

PRESIDENT/SECRETARY

GLENN DICK

glenn Dick@outlook.com

0411 840 940

VICE PRESIDENT/

TREASURER

DAVID BAWDEN

dbawden77@gmail.com

0412 011 292

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

DAVID MARTIN

LYN WORKMAN

STEVE O'CONNOR

HONORARY MEMBERS:

ANNA UNDERWOOD:

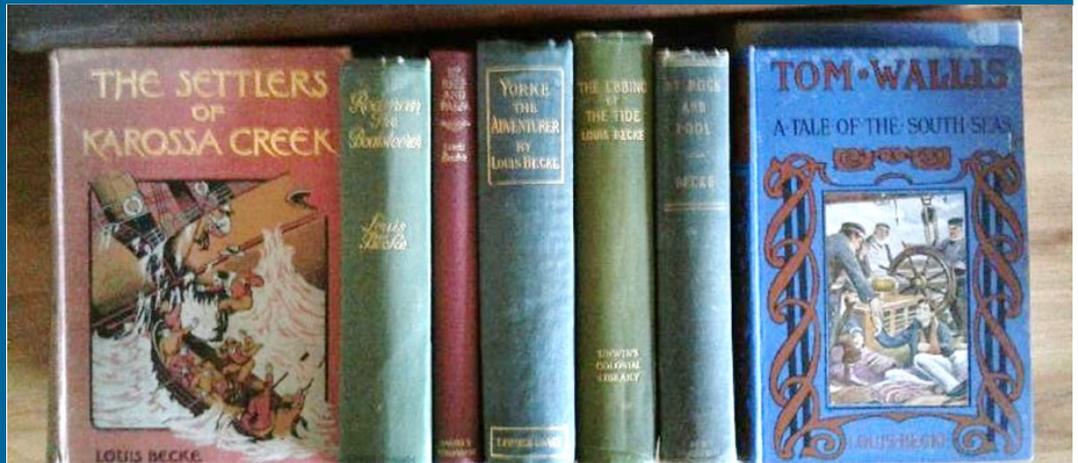
Family history (W.A.)

ALLEGRA MARSHALL:

Becke historian and attendant to his grave at Waverley Cemetery, Sydney

DR. CHRYSOPHER SPICER:

Cultural historian, author and Senior Research Fellow at James Cook University, QLD.



THE LOUIS BECKE SOCIETY (PORT MACQUARIE) INC.

PRESIDENT'S NOTES

by Glenn Dick

Welcome to our first Louis Becke Society newsletter! Port Macquarie is where it all started.

We are very excited and delighted to publish this newsletter and to share it with you - our existing members. We hope that over time our membership will increase and we therefore encourage you to help us "share the word". DO tell your friends and family about Louis and us!

Louis Becke came into my life when his story came up in our Port Macquarie Newspaper which was celebrating our sesquicentenary in 1968, and again, in further publications in 1988. I vowed then that our adventurous author would not be completely forgotten by us!

The Society's journey will investigate and re-establish Becke's position as one of our great adventurers of the Pacific region. A colourful raconteur of his wide-ranging South Pacific experiences in a time that was already passing into a former era, Louis Becke was encouraged to write his stories by Australian journalist and publisher, J. F. Archibald, co-owner and editor of *The Bulletin*. Becke may possibly be Port Macquarie's most famous citizen who achieved a high international status!

Becke grew up in the time of the post-British colonial penal system. He would have heard the stories of his old convict town, Port Macquarie, with its brutal regime and powerful, sometimes corrupt overlords. Combined with the recollections of his associations with the old shellback convicts, he and brother Vernon, travelled about the headlands and beaches freely with their local Aboriginal Birpai companions. They were trained in their ancient ways of hunting, fishing and gathering off the land and from the sea. Their indoctrination into survival and subsistence equipped Louis with skills that were to remain with him in his life in the Pacific region. These were remembered when he wrote his stories of that time in the Port during the first twelve years of his life.



George Lewis Becke (aka "Louis Becke")

Born Port Macquarie: 18 June 1855

Died Sydney: 18 February 1913

Photo credit unknown

[probably Duperly & Sons 1902 Jamaica]

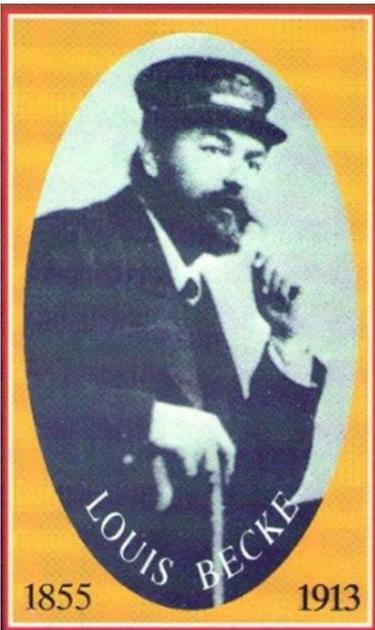


Photo credit: Stellmach Film Int. (from Marshall Islands postcard courtesy John Murray)

PRESIDENT'S NOTES *continued*

Through these youthful endeavours, he was always ready to move on to the next challenge giving him a solid understanding in humanitarianism and the ways of different societies, with all their contradictions. He was the intrepid wanderer, a “kid pirate”, with a romantic twist and a thirst for knowledge that he extended to us via his many books.

The time has come to establish a greater understanding of Louis Becke, his family and his acquaintances both in Australia, the Pacific, USA, Canada, Jamaica and Europe. His diary and travel stories, relating all these experiences, will help us seek out Louis Becke in the Pacific and in other parts of the world. It's a long journey that we have commenced, all just beginning BUT we have set sail!

Louis Becke has a solid connection to Port Macquarie and it has yet to gain the ultimate “portrait”, 107 years after his death. We now celebrate his birthday each year (18 June) with a tippie of coconut juice, followed by a pink gin or a wee dram of rum. Last June 2019 we “done” just that at the historic Court House in Hay Street.

Thank you to our small but growing list of members and the Friends of the Court House for their support and hospitality.

We anticipate Newsletters will most likely be bi-yearly productions for the moment, so watch this space!

Glenn Dick



The Becke family home (far left) around 1875, corner of William and Owen Streets, Port Macquarie.

Photo credit: Port Macquarie Historical Society

OBJECTIVES by Dr Chrystopher Spicer

- ◆ To establish and promote a greater recognition of the life and spirit of the Australian adventurer, traveller, trader, writer and ethnographer Louis Becke who was born in Port Macquarie in 1855. He attained international recognition for around 35 published volumes that include short stories, autobiography, historical and ethnographic works, many of which relate to the Port Macquarie and far north Queensland districts, as well as to his life, work and travels in the South Pacific region during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries;
- ◆ To establish and maintain ongoing cultural, educational, social and economic significance;
- ◆ To achieve these goals by acquiring, documenting, preserving, storing and exhibiting objects and related materials to that which is necessary to present the society's cause, aims and objectives, according to the Constitution, in furthering a greater understanding and knowledge of Louis Becke's life and work.

Port Committee initial
meeting, Port Macquarie,
December 2018

(L-R) Glenn Dick,
Councilor Rob Turner,
Susan Townley, David
Bawden and David
Martin

Photo credit: Gary White

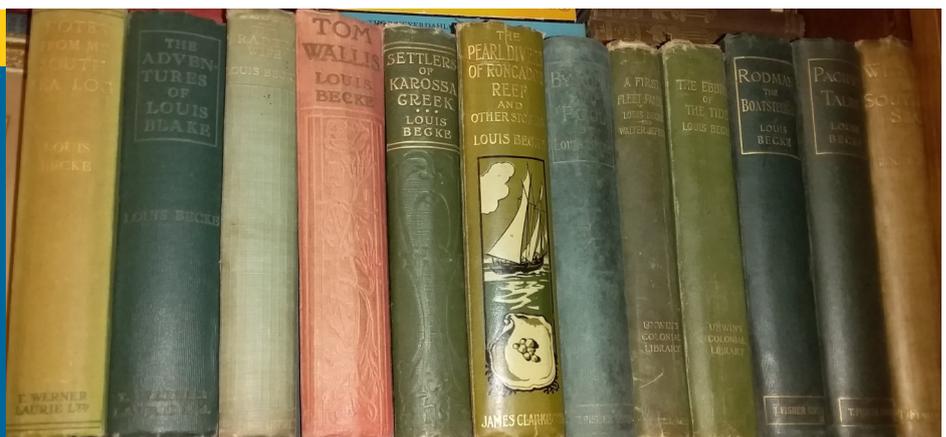


Louis Becke Society Committee members with Becke family & friends,
Port Macquarie, 25 March 2019. *Photo credit: Allegra Marshall*

WHAT'S OUR MISSION? by Glenn Dick

1. To achieve formal recognition from the Port Macquarie Hastings Council of the Louis Becke Project, which will include the creation of the Louis Becke Society, the Louis Becke Foundation, the Louis Becke Literary Award and the Louis Becke Research Archive.
2. To attain greater recognition of Louis Becke as an outstanding author of his time and to promote his contribution to Australian and international literature as well as ethnographic and historical knowledge of the South Pacific area.
3. To collaborate with major universities, museums and other organisations in the exchange of information and historical facts pertaining to Louis Becke, both nationally and internationally.
4. To establish a permanent base for a collection of Louis Becke's published works, and works about him, that would include a research and bibliographic database, related biographies, archive material and historical items of interest, including artefacts from the Pacific and other associated material. This would be in close collaboration with Becke's descendants, including the island communities where he visited and lived.
5. To initiate an annual "Louis Becke Foundation Literary Award" (as a separate entity), which would include Junior/Senior, Fiction/Non-Fiction categories, to nurture the development of writing skills, to improve literacy and to engender the spirit of creative adventure writing.
6. To investigate the feasibility of naming the public reserve (at the rear of Maritime Museum cottages, Pacific Drive) "*The Louis Becke Reserve*".
7. To coordinate the publication of Becke-related materials, including new editions and reprints of his work as well as compilations of Becke short stories and articles that may not yet have been published. (This could be co-ordinated with or in collaboration with Charles Sturt University, Port Macquarie campus, or other institutions including local schools, with the aim of aiding literacy and familiarising students with Becke's extensive history and writings).
8. To investigate the possibility of a traditional timber schooner or ketch to visit our harbour on a regular basis as a sailing-training vessel, in the same manner as several organisations that provide this type of activity for younger generations throughout Australia. Becke spent many years sailing the Pacific, often as a supercargo (a combination of bookkeeper and trading agent) on various traditional sailing vessels. In fact, many of his stories feature supercargo characters.
9. To elevate the status of Port Macquarie as an extremely important historical and literary destination nationally and internationally.
10. To compile and provide an extensive library of Becke literature and of material written about Becke's life and work, that would also include colonial literature of his time, and South Pacific literature.

"To elevate the status of Port Macquarie as an extremely important historical and literary destination nationally and internationally."



WHAT HAS THE LOUIS BECKE SOCIETY ACHIEVED SO FAR?

- ◆ There was a gathering of some of Louis Becke's family descendants over the weekend of the 23-25 March 2019 in Port Macquarie to meet the team. We hope to do this every 2 years;
- ◆ We met Allegra Marshall as well. She has been tending Louis Becke's grave for the past 30 years! An absolute power-house of knowledge on Becke, Allegra has been working on a Powerpoint Presentation: "*Louis Becke – Pacific Adventurer & Writer Extraordinaire*";
- ◆ We have achieved Incorporation and name registration for the Louis Becke Society, plus an ABN and tax file number and bank account (details on Membership Form);
- ◆ Lyn Workman has excellent research abilities and has copied all Becke references in the Port News and Macleay Argus (1880s) which makes great reading. Her partner Ian Goulding is a fabulous model ship artisan;
- ◆ A meeting with the Port Historical Museum who gave us all they had on Becke;
- ◆ Anna Underwood, a Becke Family descendant (from WA), has given us Becke's immediate family history and she continues to gain information/research into his ancestry;
- ◆ A group of us are trying to preserve the local police station and the adjoining Constables' Cottage - both next door to the historic courthouse built in 1869 - so that this area can become a "cultural precinct" within our CBD. There are ongoing discussions with our Council which in 2019 passed a 6 point resolution to preserve these two sites so that we can enjoy our heritage. Maybe one day, we may be able to use the cottage as our Display/Office Centre for the Louis Becke Society.
- ◆ Promoting Becke locally has commenced. We plan to issue a small booklet with maps and brief descriptions about each of Becke's short stories around Port Macquarie and the coastal region. This may encourage people to read more about Becke;
- ◆ The local library now has ebooks by Becke available to read - also refer to <https://www.gutenberg.org/>

Anna Underwood, a Becke family descendant (from WA), has given us Becke's immediate family history and she continues to gather information & research into his ancestry.

This will ALL take "LOTS O TIME".

To achieve all of the above and more, [Documentary & radio interview e.g. ABC "Conversations", a painting of Louis Becke (by Glenn Dick), Facebook page etc.], the Louis Becke Society needs new members. Our Membership Form is being sent to you alongside this Newsletter. Please pass it on to anyone you know who is interested in joining. Thankyou.

David Bawden



Photo credit: Gregory Ross

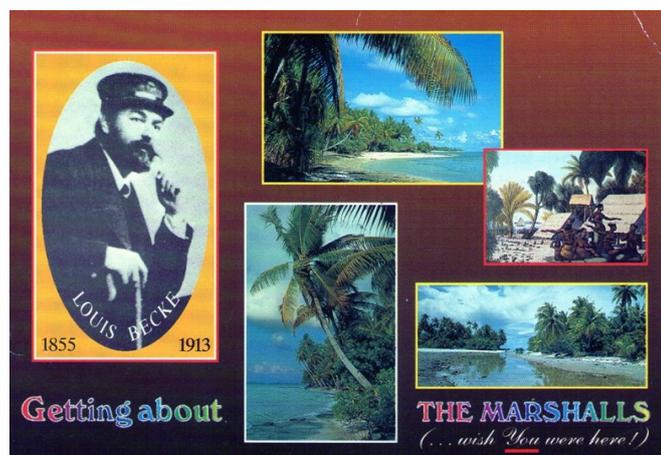
FUTURE NEWSLETTERS!

- Introduction to Louis Becke by Dr Chrystopher Spicer
- Why did David Bawden (our Treasurer) become interested in Louis Becke?
- South Sea artefacts donated by Louis Becke currently at the Powerhouse Museum/ Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences (MAAS)
- Alrema, Louis Becke's second daughter and perhaps one of Australia's first female surfers
- Upcoming events in Port Macquarie (Market Day, 26 January 2021 & Bicentenary of Port Macquarie, 10 -18 April 2021) – we are proposing a marquee which will house promotional Louis Becke material



Photo credit: Allegra Marshall

*Photo credit: Stellmach Film Int.
(from Marshall Islands postcard
courtesy John Murray)*



This Newsletter has been prepared and edited by Allegra Marshall & Anna Underwood and kindly typeset by Gregory Ross, (President of the Friends of Waverley Cemetery; Waverley Cemetery is where Louis Becke is buried).

Louis Becke has many readers in Australia and around the world. His books are very collectable items. For general enquiries, please contact Allegra Marshall on legropeoz@hotmail.com or Anna Underwood on anna.underwood@bigpond.com