



media release

### Launch of new book: "Vacy to Gresford – People and Places"

Paterson Historical Society is pleased to announce the launch of a new book titled "Vacy to Gresford – People and Places" on Sunday 17 March 2024 in the Vacy School of Arts beginning at 2pm. The book will be launched by Mr Dave Layzell MP, member for Upper Hunter. Afternoon tea will be served at the conclusion of the launch.

The book was written by Society member and long-time historian Dr Brian Walsh. It covers the people and places along the Paterson and Allyn Rivers between Vacy and Gresford. The book reveals how a whole new European Society emerged along the two rivers from the 1820s, albeit at the expense of the dispossession of Aboriginal people.

The immigrants lured by grants of riverside land were remarkably diverse in terms of age, wealth, nationality and life experience. Welshman Charles Boydell was barely old enough to shave when he was granted "Camyr Allyn". In contrast, Jamaican plantation owner and slave master Francis Blower Gibbes had fought in the Battle of Trafalgar two decades before he was granted "Norwood". Constantine Crichton who purchased "Wallah" near Gresford was born in St Petersburg, Russia where his father was personal physician to the Tsar. Irish shepherd-boy Edward Kealy was granted a mere 200 acres that he named "Summer Hill".

The book covers far more than the land owners. It also provides information on the convicts, emancipists, free immigrants and colonial born who worked on the estates or leased parts of them as tenant farmers. This includes the wave of German immigrants in the 1840s and 1850s.

"Vacy to Gresford" shows how the subdivision of many of the large estates from the late 1800s replaced a mosaic of tenanted farms with a patchwork of small, privately owned farms, many of which became dairy farms. The book also explains the formation and history of the villages of Vacy, Gresford and East Gresford.

President of Paterson Historical Society, Dr Cameron Archer AM, said "Brian's book tells a story of heartbreak for some, prosperity for others but for most a story of toil, thrift and resilience. The families of those whose forebears came with nothing but the shirts on their backs are now the fabric of a community that respects and values its history and heritage. This book will give them a greater understanding of how their families lived in the Valley."

The 190 page book includes many maps and images, a detailed index and list of references. The Society invites all those interested to attend the launch.

Cameron Archer AM  
President

1 February 2024