



Richmond River Historical Society

Museum Flood Update for Members

LISMORE MUSEUM SURVIVES THE FLOOD



One day after the flood; red dashes indicate maximum flood height.

March 2022 will be remembered in Lismore as the most disastrous flood in recorded history. Our thoughts go to all those affected by the devastation of the flood across the whole catchment of the Richmond River.

As the initial shock wore off, those closely associated with the museum wondered about what would be found when we were able to enter the building. It was a relief to hear that the waters stopped rising a mere thirty centimetres from the top floor where our displays are housed. However, we also use downstairs rooms for storage and these were completely inundated.

Museum volunteers began on Friday morning to begin the clean up and recovery work, and spent the next few days in the mud and mess dragging out sodden objects and recoverable items to clear the rooms for the hose out of mud. Many items were immediately cleaned and dried. Some larger items were removed offsite for cleaning and temporary storage as no electricity was available for more robust cleaning. Some very valuable items were taken by refrigerated transport to Brisbane for professional restoration. This was organised by Museums and Galleries NSW (MGNSW).

This special newsletter is both a thankyou to the volunteers who worked so tirelessly, and to graphically indicate to members what they did.

A message from the RRHS President

The unprecedented size of the flood meant that we had a most nervous wait from the Monday peak, with no sighting of the building. Of course the tragic circumstances for many locals outweighed our own concerns through those days. On the Thursday we were able to sight the building.

With our indefatigable Jeff Kerr, the Museum Coordinator, as our site manager, we did respond in a well-planned way. Thank you to those many volunteers who then assisted.

Amongst the massive clean-up, we had water damage to two cabinets of maps and plans as well as to cases of archival film. These had been stored on a platform well above the 1974 flood level.

Early inquiries for support came from Brett Adlington of Museums and Galleries NSW, under the direction of Ben Franklin, the NSW Minister for the Arts. Both were on the site on that first day of access, and they have arranged for those cabinets and cases to be chill-transported to Brisbane for conservation, all with no cost to our museum.

More broadly, the concern expressed by many reveals the high value which Lismore places on its museum.

Robert Smith

Please Note

The Museum will not reopen until after electricity is restored and full services can be restored. Watch for an emailed announcement when we have a firm date.

The Bulletin for March will be held over until June.

The March Quarterly Meeting will now not go ahead.

Clean up and Recovery



It does look a little like the first glimpses inside King Tutankhamen's tomb but no, this is inside one of the downstairs storage rooms.

The picture does not really do justice to the smell, dampness and pervasive mud that Robert, Ted and Geoff found on entry to the building.



About halfway through removal and sorting of objects from the rooms. This was completed by museum volunteers and several others who just wandered in. The pile was much larger by day two.



Assistance also came from MGNSW personnel who arrived to assess which items should be removed for professional cleaning and restoration in Brisbane.



A steady team of helpers arrived to immediately wash and dry small items such as crockery, kitchen utensils and glassware. Much of this was then taken offsite until it can be safely returned to storage in the building.

Samoa and Fiji to the Rescue

There are many stories about the Fijian and Samoan workers who helped out so much during the flood. The bottom floor of the Museum has many carpeted office spaces and, though these had been cleared out, the sodden carpet and underlay needed to be moved before the building could be hosed out by Fire and Rescue personnel. A large team appeared at the building and very quickly pulled and carried out almost the equivalent of a tennis court area of carpet and underlay. This was achieved with much singing, chanting and humour. No wonder their football teams are so good!

