

Social Life In Early Windsor

When the early settlers came to the Hawkesbury, the greatest need was to survive.

Everyone faced the same difficulties, and the bonds of equality brought neighbours together to help each other as best they could. The earliest documented leisure activity (apart from sharing the odd drop) was a horse race held in 1806 along the Killarney Chain of Ponds.

The settlers brought with them many of the customs of their Homeland, but many new sports flourished in an area where sport often relied on whatever was available.

Settlers competed in, and bet on, any activity of physical prowess - jumping from one upright bottle to another, rolling down hills in empty casks, running races balancing pumpkins or carrying sledge hammers by a nail in the handle. A cow race (with owners being jockeys) was held in 1812 down George Street.

Traditional sports such as horse racing and cricket became popular, as did bare-fisted fighting and coursing. Less well-to-do folk enjoyed dancing in the hotel bars - the Hornpipe and the Four-Handed Reel were danced bare-footed on floorboards.

Grand Balls highlighted the social seasons, the highlight being the "Bachelors' Ball" at Coffey's "Daniel O'Connell Inn" (now the museum). Mr Hale hosted Balls at the old brick stables (demolished to make room for Westpac Bank), the stables having white stone floors. Fairfield was also the scene of many balls and sporting events in the days of Henry McQuade.

Travelling companies often came to Windsor, including Fred Mills (world's principal ventriloquist), and Windsor boasted its own Chamber of Horrors in the Waxwork Museum above Miss Bushell's establishment (Baker Street).

St Matthews